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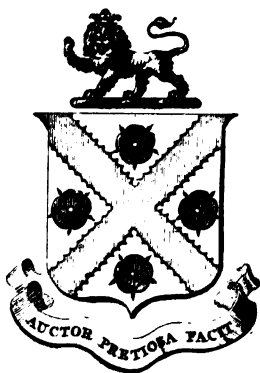
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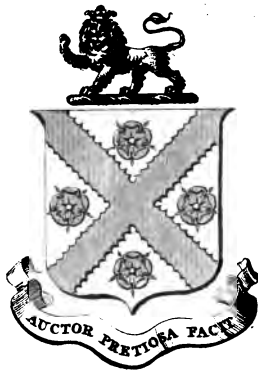
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ESPECIAL PATRONAGE**



**OF
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
THE QUEEN.**

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ESPECIAL PATRONAGE**



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HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
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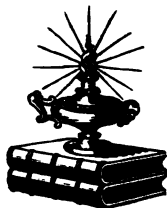
THE REV. R. CATTERMOLE, B.D.

AND

THE REV. H. STEBBING, M.A.

VOL. IX.

LADORE



RELUCENS.

John Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly;

**WHITTAKER & CO. AVE-MARIA LANE; SIMPKIN & MARSHALL,
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AND CUMMING, DUBLIN.**

MDCCLXXXIV.

LONDON :
JOSEPH RICKERBY, PRINTER,
SHERBOURN LANE.



NEW YORK
JUN 18 1854

PRIVATE THOUGHTS

UPON

RELIGION AND A CHRISTIAN LIFE;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE

NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE

OF FREQUENT COMMUNION.

IN TWO VOLS.

BY

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

WITH

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS,

BY THE

REV. HENRY STEBBING, M.A.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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THOUGHTS

UPON A

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

THOUGHTS UPON THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY.

THOUGH there be many in the world that seem to be religious, there are but few that are so : one great reason whereof is, because there are so many mistakes about religion, that it is an hard matter to hit upon the true notion of it : and therefore desiring nothing in this world so much as to be an instrument in God's hand to direct men into the true religion, my great care must, and by the blessing of God shall be, to instil into them right conceptions of him, that is the only object of all religious acts, without which it is impossible to continue, or indeed to be religious : the true nature and notion of religion consisting in the right carriage and deportment of our whole man, both soul and body, towards him that made us : whom therefore, unless we truly know, we can never be truly religious ; and therefore they that begin their religion with zeal and passion, begin at the wrong end ; for in-

deed they begin where they should end : our zeal for God, and love unto him, being the highest acts of religion, and therefore cannot be the first ; but they necessarily presuppose the true knowledge of God, without which our zeal will be blind, and our love both groundless and transient.

But as it is impossible to be truly religious, unless we know God, so it is very difficult so to know him, as to become truly religious. It is true that there is such a supreme Being in and over the world, as we call God ; the very light of nature teaches, and reason itself demonstrates it to be the most certain and undeniable. But what he is, and what apprehensions we ought to have of this glorious Being, none but himself is able to describe and manifest unto us ; so that our conceptions of him are still to be regulated by the discoveries that he hath made of himself to us ; without which, though we may have some confused notions of him, yet we can never so know him, as to serve him faithfully, and, by consequence, be truly religious.

Hence, therefore, if we would know God, we must search the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, wherein God hath been pleased most clearly to manifest and discover himself unto us ; I say, both the Old and New Testaments, for otherwise, our knowledge of God may be very defective and erroneous, there being several things which God, in the New Testament, hath most plainly revealed of himself, which in the Old Testament are more darkly and obscurely delivered to us. As for example the great mystery of the Trinity ; though it be frequently intimated in the Old Testament, yet it is an hard matter rightly to understand it without the New ; insomuch, that the Jews, though they

have had the law above three thousand, and the prophets above two thousand years among them, yet to this day they could never make this an article of faith; but they, as well as the Mahometans, still assert, "That God is only one in person as well as nature:" whereas nothing can be more plain from the New Testament, than that there is but one God, and yet there are three persons, every one of which is that one God: and so that though God be but one in nature, yet he is three in persons; and so three persons, as yet to be but one in nature.

And, verily, although there was no other text in all the Scripture, whereon to ground this fundamental article of our Christian faith, that of 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,'¹ is a sufficient foundation for it; there being nothing, I think, necessary to be believed concerning the glorious Trinity, but what may easily and naturally be deduced from these words; which were spoken, it is true, by our Saviour before his ascension, but I question whether they were thoroughly understood, till after the Holy Ghost was come down on earth: it being only by God himself that we can come to the true knowledge of him, much less are we able rightly to apprehend, and firmly to believe three persons in the Godhead, without the assistance of one of them, that is, of the Holy Ghost, by whom the other two are wont to work; he being the issue, if I may so say, and breath of both. Hence it is, that the wisdom of the church, for these many centuries, hath thought fit to order, that this great mystery be

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

celebrated the next Lord's day after the commemoration of the Holy Spirit's coming down upon the disciples, and in them, upon all true believers; both because all three persons have now manifested themselves to mankind; the Father in his creation of them, the Son in his conversing with them, and the Holy Ghost by his coming down upon them: and also to show, that it is only by the grace and assistance of God's Spirit that we can rightly believe in this glorious and incomprehensible mystery which our Saviour hath so clearly revealed to us in these words, 'Go ye and teach all nations,' &c.

For the opening of which, we must know that our Saviour, in the foregoing verse, acquaints his disciples, that now all power was given him 'in heaven and in earth;' by virtue whereof he here issueth forth his commission to his apostles, and, in them, to all that should succeed them, to supply his room, and be his vicegerents upon earth, he being now to reside in his kingdom of heaven. For saith he, 'all power is given to me in heaven and earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations.' As he also saith elsewhere to them, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you.' As if he should have said, My Father having committed to me all power and authority both in heaven and earth, I therefore authorize and commissionate, yea, and command you to go and teach all nations, &c.

This therefore is part of the commission which our Lord and master left with his apostles immediately before he parted from them. Those being the last words which St. Matthew records him to have spoken upon earth; and therefore they must

¹ John xx. 21.

needs contain matter of very great importance to his church ; and it must needs highly concern us all to understand the true meaning and purport of them, which that we may the better do, in treating of them, I shall observe the same method and order as he did in speaking them.

First, therefore, here is the work he sends the apostles about ; ‘ Go ye therefore and teach,’ Πορευθέντες ἔν μαθητεύσατε, which more properly may be rendered, ‘ Go ye therefore and disciple all nations,’ or ‘ make the persons of all nations to be my disciples,’ that is, Christians. That this is the true meaning of the words, is plain and clear, from the right notion of the word here used, μαθητεύω, which coming from μαθητής, a disciple, it always signifieth either to be or to make disciples, wheresoever it occurs in all the Scriptures ; as μαθητευθεὶς,¹ which is instructed, say we, the Syriac better, *damtachlamad*, that is, made a disciple, a תלמיד, that is, not only a scholar or learner, but a follower or professor of the gospel, here called the kingdom of heaven. Another place where this word occurs, is ἐμαθήτευσε τῷ Ἰησοῦ,² where we rightly translate it, ‘ was Jesus’ disciple.’ Another place is καὶ μαθητεύσαντες ἱκανὸς,³ which we improperly render, ‘ having taught many ;’ the Syrian and Arabic, more properly, ‘ having made many disciples.’ And these are all the places in the New Testament where this word is used, except those I am now considering, where all the eastern languages render it according to its notation, disciple. The Persian paraphrastically expounds it, ‘ Go ye and reduce all nations to my faith and religion.’ So that whosoever pleads for any other meaning of these words, do

¹ Matt. xiii. 52. ² Matt. xxvii. 57. ³ Acts, xiv. 21.

but betray their own ignorance in the original languages, and by consequence, in the true interpretation of Scripture.

I should not have insisted so long upon this, but that the false exposition of these words hath occasioned that no less dangerous than numerous sect of anabaptists in the world ; for the old Latin translation having it, *Euntes ergo, docete omnes gentes* ; hence, the German, where anabaptism first began, and all the modern translations, render it as we do, ‘ Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them.’ From whence it was supposed by some that were not able to dive into the true meaning of the words, that our Saviour here commanded that none should be baptized but such as were first taught the principles of the Christian religion ; which is the greatest mistake imaginable ; for our Saviour doth not speak one word of teaching before baptism, but only after, ver. 20, διδάσκοντες, his meaning being only that his apostles should go about the world and persuade all nations to forsake their former idolatries and superstitions, and to turn Christians, or the disciples of Jesus Christ ; and such as were so should be baptized. And therefore infant baptism is so far from being forbidden, that it is expressly commanded in these words ; for all disciples are here commanded to be baptized ; nay, they are therefore commanded to be baptized, because disciples. And seeing all disciples are to be baptized, so are infants too, the children of believing parents ; for they are disciples as well as any other, or as well as their parents themselves ; for all that are in covenant with God must needs be disciples : but that children are always esteemed in covenant with God is plain, in that God himself commanded the covenant should be sealed to them,

as it was all along by circumcision. But that children are disciples, as well as others, our Saviour puts it out of all doubt, saying of children, 'of such is the kingdom of God.'¹ And therefore they must needs be disciples, unless such as are not disciples can belong to the kingdom of God, which a man must be strangely distempered in his brain before he can so much as fancy.

And besides, that children, so long as children, are looked upon as part of their parents; and therefore as their parents are, so are they: if their parents be heathen, so are the children; if the parents be Jews, so are the children; if the parents be Christian, so are the children too; nay, if either of the parents be a Christian or disciple, the children of both are denominated from the better part, and so looked upon as Christians too, as is plain, 1 Cor. vii. 14. 'But now are they holy,' that is, in a federal or covenant sense, they are in covenant with God; they are believers, Christians, or disciples, because one of their parents is so.

Now seeing children are disciples as well as others, and our Saviour here commands all disciples to be baptized, it necessarily follows that children must be baptized too. So that the opinion that asserts, that children ought not to be baptized, is grounded upon a mere mistake, and upon gross ignorance of the true meaning of the Scripture, and especially of this place, which is most ridiculously mistaken for a prohibition, it being rather a command for infant baptism.

But I must crave the reader's excuse for this digression from the matter principally intended,

¹ Mark, x. 14.

though I could not tell how to avoid it; nothing being more needful than to rescue the words of our blessed Saviour from those false glosses and horrible abuses which these last ages have put upon them, especially it coming so directly in my way as this did.

Secondly, here is the extent of their commission, which is very large indeed, not being directed to some few particular persons, but to nations; not to some particular nations only, but to all nations; 'Go ye therefore and disciple all nations;' or all the world, as it is, Mark, xvi. 15. This was that which the prophet Isaiah, or rather God by him foretels, Isaiah, xlix. 6, which our Saviour himself seems to have respect unto, Luke, xxiv. 46, 47. The meaning whereof, in brief, is this, that though the Jews hitherto had been the only people of God, and none but they admitted into covenant with him, now the Gentiles also are to be brought in and made confederates or co-partners with them in the covenant of grace; that the partition-wall being now broken down, the gospel is to be preached to all other nations, as well as the Jewish; Christ being now come to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles as well as the glory of his people Israel.'

But though the words of the commission be so clear to this purpose, yet the apostles themselves understood it not, till God had interpreted it from heaven to St. Peter, showing him in a vision, that he should call no man 'common or unclean.'¹ From which time forward, he, with the rest of the apostles, observed their commission exactly in

¹ Acts, x. 28.

preaching to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. And this was one end, wherefore the Holy Ghost came down amongst them, even to enable them to do what their Master had commanded them, to preach unto all nations; but that they could not do, unless they could speak all languages, which therefore the Holy Ghost enabled them to do, Acts, ii. 4, 5, which also is a clear demonstration of the true meaning and purport of these words: for there was no necessity that the Spirit should teach the apostles all languages, but that the Son had first enjoined them to preach unto all nations.

Thirdly, hence is the manner whereby they are to admit all nations into the church of Christ, or into the Christian religion, by baptizing them 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' For the opening whereof we must know that baptism was a rite in common use amongst the Jews before our Saviour's time, by which they were wont to admit proselytes into their religion, baptizing them in the name of the Father, or of God. A little before our Saviour's appearance in the world, John Baptist being sent to prepare the way for him, baptized the Jews themselves, as many as came unto him, in the name of the Messiah to come, which was called the baptism of repentance. 'I indeed baptize you,' says he, 'with water to repentance; but he that comes after me is mightier than I,' &c.¹ But when our Saviour was to go to heaven, he left orders with his apostles to make disciples; or admit all nations into the religion that he had preached, confirmed with miracles,

¹ Matt. iii. 11.

and sealed with his own blood, by baptizing them 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;' which form of baptism, questionless, his apostles faithfully observed all along, as may be gathered also from Acts, xix. 2, 3, where we may observe, how when they said that they 'had not so much as heard of a Holy Ghost,' he wondering at that, asked them, 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' plainly intimating, that if they had been baptized aright, according to Christ's institution, they could not but have heard of the Holy Ghost, because they had been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But verse 5, also Acts, ii. 38, chap. viii. 16, we read of baptism administered in the name of the Lord Jesus; from whence some have thought that the apostles baptized only the Gentiles in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, 'but the Jews in the name of the Lord Jesus only; because they believing in the Father already, if they were but baptized in the name of Jesus, and so testified their belief that he was the Messiah, they could not but believe in his Spirit too; but this expression of baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus, seems to me rather to intimate that form of baptism which the Lord Jesus instituted: for, doubtless, the apostles observed the precepts of our Lord better than so as to do it one way, when he had commanded it to be done another; and baptized only in the name of Jesus, when he had enjoined them to baptize 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

Neither did the church ever esteem that baptism valid, which was not administered exactly according to the institution, in the name of all the three

persons; which the primitive Christians were so strict in the observance of, that it was enjoined, that all persons to be baptized should be plunged three times into the water, first at the name of the Father, and then at the name of the Son, and lastly, at the name of the Holy Ghost; that so every person might be distinctly nominated, and so our Saviour's institution exactly observed in the administration of this sacrament.

Hence also it was, that all persons to be baptized were always required, either with their own mouths, if adult, or if infants, by their sureties, to make a public confession of their faith in the three persons into whose names they were to be baptized: for this indeed was always looked upon as the sum and substance of the Christian religion, to "believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Ghost;" and they who believed in these three persons, were still reputed Christians; and they who did not were esteemed infidels or heretics.

Yea, and our Saviour himself hath sufficiently declared, how necessary it is for us to believe this great mystery; as also how essential it is to a Christian, seeing that he requires no more in order to our initiation into his church, but only that we be baptized 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' In which words we may observe:

First, A trinity of persons, into whose names we are baptized, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is that mystery of mysteries which is too high for human understandings to conceive, but not too great for a divine faith to believe; even that although there be but one God, there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

every one of which is that one and the self-same God : and therefore it is that baptism is here commanded to be administered in the name of all three.

Now to confirm our faith in this great mystery, whereinto we are all baptized, I shall endeavour to show in few terms, what grounds we have in Scripture to believe it. For which end we must know, that though this mystery hath received great light by the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon the world, yet it did not lie altogether undiscovered before ; ‘ yea, from the very foundation of the world,’ the church, in all ages, hath had sufficient ground whereupon to build their faith on this great and fundamental truth : for in the very creation of the world, he that created it is called *Eloim*, in the plural number : and in the creation of man, he said, ‘ Let us make man in our own image ;’ from whence, though not a trinity, yet a plurality of persons is plainly manifested ; yea, in the beginning of the world too, we find both Father, Son, and Spirit concurring in the making of it.

For, first, It is said, ‘ that God created heaven and earth ;’ and then, ‘ that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.’¹ There are two persons, God, and the Spirit of God. And then we read how God made the world by his word : ‘ He said, let there be light, and there was light.’ From which expression St. John himself concludes, ‘ that all things were made by the Son of God,’ or ‘ his Word,’² and so does St. Paul, Col. i. 16.

Thus we read afterwards, ‘ The Spirit of the

¹ Gen. i. 1, 2.

² John, i. iii.

Lord spake by me, and his word by my tongue,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, where we have Jehovah, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Word of Jehovah, plainly and distinctly set down. As also in Psalm xxxiii. 6, and Isa. lxii. 1, where there is the Lord speaking of his Son, and saying, 'That he will put his Spirit upon him;' and this also seems to be the reason why the holy angels, when they praise God, say, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts,'¹ saying holy thrice, in reverence to the three persons they adore.

Thus we might discover this truth in the Old Testament; but in the New we can scarce look over it. For when Jesus was baptized, Matt. iii. 16, had we, who know nothing but by our senses, been present at this time with Jesus at Jordan, our very senses would have conveyed this truth to our understandings, whether we would or no. Here we should have heard a voice from heaven; whose was it but that of God the Father? Here we should have seen one coming out of Jordan; who was that but God the Son? Here we should have seen something else too, in the form of a dove; who was that but God the Spirit? Thus was God the Father heard speaking; God the Son was seen ascending out of the water; and God the Holy Ghost descending from heaven upon him. The first was heard in the sound of a voice, the second was seen in the form of a man, and the third was beheld in the shape of a dove.

"Voce Pater, atus corpore, flamen ave."

But there are many such places as this all the

¹ Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.

New Testament over, where the three persons of the Godhead are distinctly mentioned, as Luke, i. 35.; John, xiv. 16, 26; xvi. 7. Gal. iv. 6. But the words of St. Paul are very remarkable too, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And yet that all these three persons were but one God¹ St. John expressly asserts, saying, ‘There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, and the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one,’² Which certainly are as plain and perspicuous terms as it is possible to express so great a mystery in. But I need not have gone so far to have proved that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead: the words I am treating of being a sufficient demonstration of it: for as all the three persons met together at our Saviour’s baptism; so doth our Saviour here command, that all his disciples be baptized in the name of all three: and therefore I cannot but admire how any one should dare to profess himself to be a Christian, and yet deny or oppose the sacred Trinity, into which he was baptized when he was made a Christian: for, by this means, he renouncing his baptism, blasphemes Christ, unchristians himself, blotting his own name out of the catalogue of those who were made Christians only by being baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

II. Here is the Godhead of the Trinity, or of every person in the Trinity, that one as well as the other is God: for here we see divine worship is to be performed to them all; and all that profess the true religion must be baptized in the name of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father;

¹ Gen. xviii. 2, 3; John, x. 30.

² 1 John, v. 7.

which certainly would be the greatest absurdity, yea, the most horrid impiety imaginable, were not they God as well as he. For, if they be not God, they are creatures; if they be creatures, reason as well as Scripture forbids the same honour and worship to be conferred on them, which is given to God himself, and only due to him; which here, notwithstanding, we see is given to them, and that by our Lord himself, commanding baptism to be administered in his own name and in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as in the name of the Father, and so making himself and the Spirit equal sharers in the same honour that is given to the Father. So that, was there no other place in the whole Scripture to prove it, this alone would be sufficient to convince any gainsayer, that the Son and Spirit are God as well as the Father, or rather the same God with him. But that I may unveil this mystery, and confirm this truth more clearly, we will consider each person distinctly, and show that one as well as the other is really God.

That the Father is God, none ever denied it, and therefore we need not prove it. But, if the Father be God, the Son must needs be God too; for the same names, properties, works, and worship, which in Scripture are ascribed to the Father, are frequently ascribed to the Son also in Scripture; the Father is called Jehovah in Scripture, so is the Son, Hos. i. 7; Jer. xxiii. 6; the Father is called God, so is the Son, John, i. 1; 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;' with God, as to his person: God as to his nature. So also, John, xx. 28; Acts, xx. 28, &c. Moreover, is the Father Alpha and Omega, the first and the last? So is the Son, Rev. i. 8. Is

the Father eternal? So is the Son, Isa. ix. 6; Rev. i. 8. Is the Father almighty? So is the Son, Heb. i. 3. Is the Father every where? So is the Son, Matt. xviii. 20. Doth the Father know all things? So doth the Son, John, xxi. 17, ii. 24. Did the Father make all things? So did the Son, John, i. 3. Doth the Father preserve all things? So doth the Son, Heb. i. 3. Doth the Father forgive sins? So doth the Son, Matt. ix. 6. Is the Father to be worshipped? So is the Son, Heb. i. 6. Is the Father to be honoured? So is the Son, John, v. 23. No wonder therefore that Christ being thus in the 'form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God.'¹ He did not rob God of any glory, by saying himself was equal to him. The greatest wonder is, how any one can believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, and deny this great truth, than which nothing can be more plain from Scripture: nothing being more frequently and more clearly asserted than this is. And verily it is well for us it is so; for if Christ was not God, neither could he be our Saviour. None being able to free us from sins, but only he against whom they were committed. And therefore I cannot imagine how any one can doubt of Christ's divinity, and yet expect pardon and salvation from him: all our hopes and expectations from him depending only upon his assumption of our human nature into a divine person.

And that the Holy Ghost also is God, is frequently asserted in the holy Scriptures which himself indited. Indeed this very inditing of the Scriptures was a clear argument of his Deity, as

¹ Phil. ii. 6.

well as the Scriptures indited by him. What man, what angel, what creature, who but God could compose such articles of faith, enjoin such divine precepts, foretel and fulfil such prophecies as in Scripture are contained, who spake unto all, or by the prophets? who did they mean, when they said, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts?' Who was this Lord of hosts, that instructed them what to speak or write? Was it 'God the Father,' or 'God the Son?' No, but it was 'God the Holy Ghost:' 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'¹ The Holy Ghost therefore being the Lord of hosts, he must needs be God, there being no person that is or can be called the Lord of hosts, but he that is the very and eternal God.

This also may be gathered from 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you;'² for none can be the temple of God, but he in whom God dwells; for it is God's dwelling in a place that makes that place the temple of God; and yet we are here said to be the temple of God, because the Spirit dwelleth in us. And elsewhere, 'Know ye not,' saith the apostle, 'that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that is in you?'³ which could not be unless the Holy Ghost was God.

Another express Scripture we have for it where St. Peter propounds this question to Ananias, 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?' and then tells him, in the next verse,

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21; Acts, xxviii. 25; xxi. 11.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

‘Thou hast not lied to men, but to God ;’¹ and so expressly asserts the Holy Ghost to be God.

Moreover, that the Holy Ghost is truly God, co-equal to the Father and Son, it is plain, in that the Scriptures assert him to be, to have, and do whatsoever the Father or Son, is, hath, or doth, as God. For, is the Father and Son eternal ? So is the Spirit.² Is God the Father and the Son every where ? So is the Spirit.³ Is God the Father, and the Son, a wise, understanding, powerful, and knowing God ? So is the Spirit.⁴ Are we baptized in the name of the Father and the Son ? So are we baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost. May we sin against the Father and the Son ? So may we sin too against the Holy Ghost. Nay, the sin against this person only, is accounted by our Saviour to be a sin never to be pardoned,⁵ We may sin against God the Father, and our sin may be pardoned ; we may sin against God the Son, and our sin may be pardoned ; but if we sin or speak against the Holy Ghost, ‘that shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.’ But, if the Holy Ghost be not God, how can we sin against him ; or how comes our sin against him only to be unpardonable, unless he be God ? I know it is not therefore unpardonable, because he is God, for then the sins against the Father and the Son would be unpardonable too, seeing they both are God as well as he ; yet though this sin is not therefore unpardonable because he is God, yet it could not be unpardonable, unless he was God. For, supposing him not to be God, but

¹ Acts, v. 3, 4.

² Heb. ix. 14.

³ Psal. cxxxix. 7.

⁴ Isa. xi. 2.

⁵ Matt. xii. 31, 32.

a creature, and yet the sin against him to be unpardonable, then the sins against a creature would be unpardonable, when sins against God himself are pardoned : which to say, would itself, I think, come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost. But seeing our Saviour describes this unpardonable sin, by blaspheming or speaking against the Holy Ghost, let them have a care that they be not found guilty of it, who dare deny the Holy Ghost to be really and truly God, and so blaspheme and speak the worst that they can against him.

III. We have seen what ground we have to believe, that there are three persons in the Godhead, and that every one of these three persons is God ; we are now to consider the order of those persons in the Trinity, described in the words before us.

First, the Father, and then the Son, and then the Holy Ghost : every one of which is really and truly God : and yet they are but one real and true God. A mystery which we are all bound to believe, but yet must have a great care how we speak of it, it being both easy and dangerous to mistake in expressing so mysterious a truth as this is. If we think of it, how hard is it to contemplate upon one numerically divine nature, in more than one and the same divine person ; or upon three divine persons in no more than one and the same divine nature ? If we speak of it, how hard is it to find out fit words to express it ? If I say the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be three, and every one distinctly God, it is true ; but if I say, they be three, and every one a distinct God, it is false. I may say, the divine persons are distinct in the divine nature ; but I cannot say, that the divine nature is divided into the divine persons. I may say, God

the Father is one God, and the Son is one God, and the Holy Ghost is one God ; but I cannot say, that the Father is one God, and the Son another God, and the Holy Ghost a third God. I may say, the Father begat another who is God ; yet I cannot say that he begat another God. And from the Father and the Son proceedeth another who is God, yet I cannot say, from the Father and the Son proceedeth another God. For all this while, though their persons be distinct, yet still their nature is the same. So that though the Father be the first person in the Godhead, the Son the second, the Holy Ghost the third ; yet the Father is not the first, the Son the second, the Holy Ghost a third God ; so hard a thing it is to word so great a mystery aright, or to fit so high a truth with expressions suitable and proper to it, without going one way or other from it. And therefore I shall not use many words about it, lest some should slip from me unbecoming of it ; but, in as few terms as I can, I will endeavour to show upon what account the Father is the first, the Son the second, and the Holy Ghost the third person in the Trinity.

First, therefore, the Father is placed first, and really is the first person, not as if he was before the other two, for they are all co-eternal ; but because the other two received their essence from him ; for the Son was begotten of the Father ; and the Holy Ghost proceeded both from the Father and Son ; and therefore the Father is termed by the primitive Christians, *ρίζα καὶ ληγή Θεότητος*, “the root and the fountain of Deity.” As in waters there is the fountain or well-head, then there is a spring that boils up out of that fountain, and then there is the stream that flows both from the fountain and

the spring, and yet all these are but one and the same water; so here God the Father is the fountain of the Deity; the Son, as the spring that boils up out of the fountain; and the Holy Ghost, that flows from both, and yet all three are but one and the same God. The same may also be explained by another familiar instance; the sun, you know, begets beams, and from the sun, and beams together proceed both light and heat; so God the Father begets the Son, and from the Father and Son together proceeds the Spirit of knowledge and grace: but as the sun is not before the beams, nor the beams before the light and heat, but altogether; so neither is the Father before the Son, nor Father or Son before the Holy Ghost, but only in order and relation to one another; in which only respect, the Father is the first person in the Trinity.

Secondly, the Son is the second person, who is called the Son, yea, and the 'only begotten Son of God,' because he was begotten of the Father, not as others are by spiritual regeneration, but by eternal generation, as none but himself is, for the opening whereof, we must know, that God that made all things fruitful, is not himself sterile or barren; but he that hath given power to animals to generate and produce others in their own nature, is himself much more able to produce one, not only like himself, but of the self-same nature with himself, as he did in begetting his Son, by communicating his own unbegotten essence and nature to him. For the person of the Son was most certainly begotten of the Father, or otherwise he would not be his Son; but his essence was unbegotten, otherwise he would not be God, and therefore the highest apprehensions that we can frame of this great mystery,

the eternal generation of the Son of God, is only by conceiving the person of the Father to have communicated his divine essence to the person of the Son. And so of himself begetting his other self the Son, by communicating his own eternal and unbegotten essence to him. I say, 'by communicating of his essence, not of his person to him, for then they would be both the same person, as now they are of the same essence: the essence of the Father did not beget the Son by communicating his person to him, but the person of the Father begat the Son by communicating his essence to him; so that the person of the Son is begotten, not communicated, but the essence of the Son is communicated, not begotten.

This notion of the Father's begetting the Son by communicating his essence to him I ground upon the Son's own words, who certainly best knew how himself was begotten: 'For, as the Father,' saith he, 'hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.'¹ To have life in himself, is an essential property of the divine nature, and therefore wheresoever that is given or communicated, the nature itself must needs be given and communicated too.

Now here we see how God the Father communicated this his essential property, and so his essence to the Son; and, by consequence, though he be a distinct person from him, yet he hath the same unbegotten essence with him; and therefore, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath the Son life in himself; and so all other essential properties of the divine nature, only with this personal

¹ John, v. 26.

distinction, that the Father hath this life in himself not from the Son, but from himself; whereas the Son hath it, not from himself, but from the Father: or, the Father is God himself, not of the Son; the Son is the same God, but from the Father, not from himself; and, therefore, not the Father, but the Son is rightly called by the council of Nice, "God of Gods, light of lights, yea, very God of very God."

Thirdly, Having thus spoken of the two first persons in the sacred Trinity, we come now to the last, the Holy Ghost. The last, I say, not in nature or time, but only in order; for, as to their nature, one is not better or more God than another; neither, as to time, is one before another; none of them being measured by time, but all and every one of them eternity itself. But though not in nature or time, yet in order, one must needs be before another: for the Father is of himself, receiving his essence neither from the Son, nor from the Spirit, and therefore is, in order, before both; the Son received his essence from the Father, not from the Spirit, and therefore, in order, is before the Spirit, as well as after the Father; but the Spirit receiving his essence both from the Father and the Son, must needs, in order, be after both.

I confess the Spirit is nowhere in Scripture said to proceed from the Son, and therefore the inserting of this into the Nicene creed, was the occasion of that schism betwixt the western and eastern churches, which hath now continued for many ages; in which I think both parties are blameworthy; the western churches for inserting this clause following into the Nicene creed, without the consent of a general council; and the eastern

for denying so plain a truth as this is: for though the Spirit be not said to proceed from the Son, yet he is called the 'Spirit of the Son,'¹ which questionless he would never have been, did he not proceed from the Son as well as from the Father. And verily, the Father communicating his own individual essence and so whatsoever he is (his paternal relation excepted) to the Son, could not but communicate this to him also, even to have the Spirit proceeding from him as it doth from himself. So that as whatsoever the Father hath originally in himself, that hath the Son by communication from the Father: so hath the Son this, the Spirit's proceeding from him by communication from the Father, as the Father hath it in himself: and the Spirit thus proceeding both from the Father and the Son, hence it is that he is placed after both, not only in the words before us, but also in 1 John, v. 7, and so elsewhere.

From what I have hitherto discoursed concerning the great mystery, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, I shall gather some few inferences, and so conclude.

1. Is the Son God? yea, the same God with the Father. Hence I observe, what a strange mystery the work of man's redemption is, that God himself should become man. And he that was begotten of his Father, without a mother, from eternity, should be born of his mother, without a father, in time; that he that was perfect God, like unto the Father, in every thing, his personal properties only excepted, should also be perfect man, like unto us in all things, our personal infirmities only excepted;

¹ Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 9.

that he that made the world should be himself made in it; that eternity should stoop to time, glory be wrapt in misery, and the Sun of righteousness hid under a clod of earth; that innocence should be betrayed, justice condemned, and life itself should die, and all to redeem man from death to life. Oh wonder of wonders! how justly may we say with the apostle, 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.'¹

2. Is the Spirit also God? Hence I observe, that it is God alone that can make us holy; for seeing the Scripture all along ascribes our sanctification unto the Spirit of God, and yet the Spirit of God is himself really and truly God, it necessarily followeth, that the special concurrence and influence of almighty God himself is necessary to the making us really and truly holy.

3. Are all three persons in the Trinity one and the same God? Hence I infer, they are to have one and the same honour conferred upon them, and one and the same worship performed unto them. Or, as our Saviour himself saith, 'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.'² And, 'ye believe in God, believe also in me.'³ And, as we pray to the Father, so should we pray to the Son too, as the apostles did, and St. Stephen, and St. Paul to all three.⁴

4. Is baptism to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? Hence I observe how necessary it is to believe in these three persons, in order to our being real and true Christians; for we being made Christians in

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² John, v. 23.

³ Ibid, xiv. 1.

⁴ Luke, xvii. 5; Acts, vii. 59; 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

the name of all three, that man ceaseth to be a Christian that believes only in one; for faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, is necessary to the very constitution of a Christian; and is the principal, if not the only characteristical note whereby to distinguish a Christian from another man; yea, from a Turk; for this is the chief thing that the Turks, both in their Alcoran and other writings, upbraid Christians for, even because they believe a trinity of persons in the divine nature. For which cause they frequently say, they are people that believe God hath companions; so that take away this article of our Christian faith, and what depends upon it, and there would be but little difference betwixt a Christian and a Turk: but by this means, Turks would not turn Christians, but Christians Turks, if this fundamental article of the Christian religion was once removed; for he that doth not believe this, is no Christian upon that very account, because he doth not believe that by which a Christian is made; and whatsoever else errors a man may hold, yet if he believes in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, I cannot, I dare not but acknowledge him to be a Christian in general, because he holds fast to the foundation of the Christian religion, though perhaps he may build upon it hay and stubble, and so his superstructure be infirm and rotten.

I shall conclude with a word of advice to all such as call themselves by the name of Christ: I suppose and believe they are all Christians, from their taking that name, and therefore I need not use any arguments to persuade them to turn Christians, for so they are already by profession; but,

seeing that they are Christians, let me desire them to consider how they come to be so; even by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And if they desire to be Christians still, I must advise them to continue steadfast in that faith whereby they were made so. Of all the errors and heresies which Satan hath sowed amongst us, let us have an especial care to avoid such as strike at the very foundation of our religion; I mean the Arians, Macedonians, Socinians, and all manner of Antitrinitarians, such as deny the most sacred Trinity.

But I hope we have better learned Christ than to hearken to such opinions as these are; and therefore my next advice in brief is only this, that as we excel others in the truth of our profession, so we may excel them also in the holiness of our life and conversation: let us manifest ourselves to be Christians indeed, by believing the assertions, trusting in the promises, fearing the threatenings, and obeying the precepts of Christ our master, that both infidels and heretics may be convinced of their errors, by seeing us outstripping them in our piety towards God, equity to our neighbours, charity to the poor, unity among ourselves, and love to all; for this would be a clear demonstration, that our faith is better than theirs is, when our lives are holier than theirs are; and for our encouragement thereunto, I dare engage, that if we believe thus, as Christ hath taught us, and live as he hath commanded us, we shall also obtain what he hath promised, even 'eternal happiness in the world to come;' where we shall see, enjoy, and praise that God, into whose name we are baptized, even Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for evermore. There,

with angels and archangels, with the heavens and all the powers therein; with cherubim and seraphim, and all the blessed inhabitants of those everlasting mansions; with the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets; the noble army of martyrs; all the company of heaven, and the holy church throughout all the world, we shall eternally laud and magnify thy sacred name, "O God, the Father of heaven; O God, the Son, Redeemer of the world; O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son; O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, evermore prasing thee, the Father of an infinite majesty; together with thine honourable, true, and only Son; thee the King of glory, O Christ; and thee, O Holy Ghost, the Comforter; still joining with the heavenly choir, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory; glory be to thee, O Lord most high. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, thou [who takest away the sins of the world, and sittest at the right hand of God the Father. O blessed, glorious, and eternal Spirit; for thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father: for thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal

Trinity, and in the power of the Divine majesty to worship the Unity ; we beseech thee that thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen."

And now having led the Christian through this first stage of his course, and instructed him in the principles of his religion, and in the great mystery of the Trinity, into which he was baptized, it may be fit to bring him into the world, and show him how he ought to demean himself in regard to the things of it.

THOUGHTS UPON WORLDLY RICHES.

SECTION I.

HE that seriously considers the constitution of the Christian religion, observing the excellency of its doctrines, the clearness of its precepts, the severity of its threatenings, together with the faithfulness of its promises, and the certainty of its principles to trust to ; such a one may justly be astonished, and admire what should be the reason that they who profess this not only the most excellent, but only true religion in the world, should notwithstanding be generally as wicked, debauched, and profane, as they that never heard of it. For that they are so, is but too plain and obvious to every one that observes their actions, and compares them with the practice of Jews, Turks, and infidels. For what sin have they among them, which we have not as rife among themselves ? Are they intemperate and

luxurious? Are they envious and malicious against one another? Are they uncharitable and censorious? Are they given to extortion, rapine, and oppression? So are most of those who are called Christians. Do they blaspheme the name of God, profane his sabbaths, contemn his word, despise his ordinances, and trample upon the blood of his only Son? How many have we amongst ourselves that do these things as much as they?

But how comes this about, that they who are baptized into the name of Christ, and profess the religion which he established in the world, should be no better than other people, and in some respects far worse? Is it because, though they profess the gospel, yet they do not understand it; nor know what sins are forbidden, nor what duties are enjoined in it? That none can plead, especially amongst us who have the gospel so clearly revealed, so fully interpreted, so constantly preached to us as we have. Insomuch that if there be any one person amongst us, that understands not what is necessary to be known, in order to our everlasting happiness, it is because we will not, wilfully shutting our eyes against the light.

But what then shall we impute this wonder to, that Christians are generally as bad as heathens? Does Christ in his gospel dispense with their impieties, and give them indulgencies for their sins, and licence to break the moral law? It is true, his pretended vicar at Rome doth so; but far be it from us to father our sins upon him, who came into the world on purpose to save us from them. Indeed if we repent and turn from sin, he hath both purchased and promised pardon and forgiveness to us, but not till then: but hath expressly

told us the contrary, assuring us, that ‘except we repent we must all perish.’¹ I confess there have been such blasphemous heretics amongst us, called Antinomians who are altogether for faith without good works, making as if Christ by erecting his gospel destroyed the moral law; but none can entertain such an horrible opinion as that is, whose sinful practices have not so far depraved their principles, that they believe it is so only because they would have it to be so, directly contrary to our Saviour’s own words, ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’² But I hope there is none of us but have better learned Christ, than to think that he came to patronize our sins, who was ‘sent to bless us by turning away every one of us from our iniquities.’³ But how come Christians then to be as bad and sinful as other men? Is it because they are as destitute as other men of all means whereby to become better? No, this cannot possibly be the reason, for nothing can be more certain, than that we all have, or at least may, if we will, have whatsoever can any way conduce to the making us either holy here, or happy hereafter. We have the way that leads thereto revealed to us in the word of God; we have that word frequently expounded and applied to us: we have all free access, not only to the ordinances which God hath appointed, for our conversion, but even to the very sacraments themselves, whereby our faith may be confirmed, and our souls nourished to eternal life. And more than all this too, we have many gracious and faith-

¹ Luke, xiii. 3.² Matt. v. 17.³ Acts, iii. 26.

ful promises, that if we do but what we can, God, for Christ's sake, will afford us such assistances of his grace and Spirit, whereby we shall be enabled to perform universal obedience to the moral law, such as God, for Christ's sake, will accept of, instead of that perfection which the law requires. So that now, if we be not all as real and true saints, as good and pious Christians as ever lived, it is certainly our own faults: for we have all things necessary to the making of us such, and if we were not wanting to ourselves, it is impossible we should fail of having all our sins subdued under us, and true grace and virtue implanted in us. Insomuch that since the Christian religion was first revealed to the world, there have been certainly millions of souls converted by it, who now are glorified saints in heaven, which once were as sinful creatures upon earth as we now are. But it seems they found the gospel an effectual means of their conversion and salvation; and therefore it cannot be imputed to any defect in the gospel, or the Christian religion, that we are not all as good men as ever lived, and by consequence better than the professors of all other religions in the world.

But what then shall we say to this wonder of wonders, that Christians themselves in our age live such loose and dissolute lives as generally they do? What shall be the reason that all manner of sin and evil should be both practised and indulged among us, as much as in the darkest corners of the world, upon which the gospel never yet shined? Why, when we have searched into all the reasons that possibly can be imagined, next to the degeneracy and corruption of our nature, this must needs

be, that living upon earth, and conversing ordinarily with nothing but sensible and material objects, they are so much taken up with them, that those divine and spiritual truths which are revealed in the gospel, make little or no impression at all upon them: though they hear what the gospel saith and teacheth, yet they are no more affected with it, nor concerned about it, than as if they had never heard of it, their affection being all bent and inclined only to the things of this world. And therefore it is no wonder, that they run with so full a career into sin and wickedness, notwithstanding their profession of the gospel; seeing their natural propensity and inclination to the things of this world are so strong and prevalent within them, that they will not suffer themselves to think seriously upon, much less to concern themselves about, any thing else.

The apostle, in his first epistle to Timothy, chap. vi. endeavouring to persuade men from the over-eager desire of earthly enjoyments, presses this consideration upon us, that such an inordinate desire of the things of this world betrays men into many and great temptations, ver. 8, 9. And then he gives this as the reason of it, ver. 10. 'For the love of money is the root of all evil;' that is, in brief, the love of riches and temporal enjoyments is the great reason why men are guilty of such great and atrocious crimes as generally they are; there being no evil but what springs from this, as from its root and origin; which is so plain a truth, so constantly and universally experienced in all ages, that the heathens themselves, the ancient poets and philosophers, could not but

take notice of it. For Bion the philosopher was wont to say, that *φιλαργυρία*, the love of money, was *κακίας μητρόπολις*, the metropolis of wickedness. And Apollodorus, "When thou speakest of the love of money, thou mentionest the head of all evils, for they are all contained in that."¹ To the same purpose is that of the poet Phocylides, "The love of riches is the mother of all wickedness." What these saw by the light of nature, hath here divine authority stamped upon it; God himself asserting the same thing by his apostle, "The love of money is the root of all evil;" which, that we may the better understand, we must consider,

I. What is here meant by money :

II. What by the love of riches :

III. How the love of money is the root of all evil.

I. As for the first, I need not insist long upon it, all men knowing well enough what money is. But we must remember, that by money is here understood not only silver and gold, but all earthly comforts, possessions, and enjoyments whatsoever, whether goods, lands, houses, wares, wealth, or riches of any sort or kind whatsoever.

II. By the love of money we are to understand that sin which the Scriptures call covetousness; and the true nature and notion of it consisteth especially in three things.

1. In having a real esteem and value for wealth or money, as if it was a thing that could make men happy, or better than otherwise they would be ;

¹ ' Ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν τε τὸ κεφάλαιον τῶν κακῶν εἰρηκας ἐν φιλαργυρίᾳ, γὰρ παντ' ἐνι.

² ' Ἡ δὲ φιλοχρημοσύνη μήτηρ κακότητος ἀπάσης.

³ Ρίζα, γάρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστὶν ἡ φιλαργυρία.

as it is plain all covetous men have their desire of riches proceeding only from a groundless fancy, that their happiness consists in having much, which makes them set a greater value upon riches, preferring them before other things, even before God himself. Hence the love of money is altogether inconsistent with the love of God, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'¹ It being impossible to love God as we ought, above all things, and yet to love the world too at the same time.

2. Hence the love of money supposeth also a delight and complacency in the having of it, proceeding from the aforesaid esteem they have for it; for, being possessed of a fond opinion that the more they have, the better they are, they cannot but be pleased with the thoughts of their present enjoyments, as the rich man was in the gospel,² who, because his ground brought forth plentifully, resolved to enlarge his barns, and lay up stores for many years, and bid his soul take her ease. How many such fools have we amongst us, who please and pride themselves with the thoughts of their being rich?

3. From this esteem for, and complacency in money or wealth, it follows that men are still desirous of having more, placing their happiness only in riches; because they think they can never be happy enough, therefore they think too they are never rich enough. Hence how much soever they have, they still desire more, and therefore covetousness in Scripture is ordinarily expressed by *πλεονεξία*, which properly signifies an inordinate de-

¹ 1 John, ii. 15. ² Luke, xii. 16, 17, 18, 19.

sire of having more; which kind of desires can never be satisfied, because they are able to desire more than all the world, and to raise themselves as high, and as far as the infinite good itself. Now such a love of money as this is, consisting in having a real esteem for it, in taking pleasure and delight in it, in longing and thirsting after it; this is that which the apostle here saith 'is the root of all evil;' that is, the great and principal cause of all sorts of evil that men are guilty of, or obnoxious to; which, that I may clearly demonstrate to you, we must first know in general that there are but two sorts of evil in the world, the evil of sin, and the evil of punishment or misery; and love of money is the cause of them both.

To begin with the evil of sin, which is the only fountain from whence all other evils flow, and itself doth certainly spring from the love of money, as much or more than from any thing else in the whole world. Insomuch that the greatest part of those sins which any of us are guilty of, proceed from this master sin, even the love of money, as might easily be shown from a particular enumeration of those sins which men are generally addicted to. But that I may proceed more clearly and methodically in demonstrating this, so as to convince men of the danger of this above most other sins, I desire it may be considered that there are two sorts of sins that we are all guilty of; that is, sins of omission and sins of commission, under which two heads all sins whatsoever are comprehended.

First, for sins of omission. It is plain that our love of money is the chief and principal cause that makes us neglect and omit our duties to God and man, as it is manifest we most of us do. In speak-

ing unto which I must take leave to deal plainly, for it is a matter that concerns our eternal salvation ; and therefore howsoever some may resent it, I am bound in duty and conscience to remind men of their sins, and particularly of this great prevailing sin of covetousness, or inordinate love of money, which most men give but too much reason to fear they are guilty of; and therefore I may tell them of it, without any breach of charity. It is true, I cannot pretend to be a searcher of hearts, that is only God's prerogative, and therefore I shall not take upon me to judge or censure any particular persons; but I shall speak to all in general, and leave every one to make the particular application of it to himself. Neither shall I speak of things at random, but I shall instance only in such sins which I can assert upon my own knowledge that most men allow themselves, and that upon this account only, because they love money.

For, first, what is the reason that so few, indeed scarce any of us, are at prayers at church upon the week-day, to perform our devotion to him that made us? Is it because we think it impertinent to pray unto him? No, our presence there on Sunday contradicts that; and I have more charity than to think that any are so atheistical as to imagine it to be superfluous to pay our homage to the supreme Governor of the world, and to implore his aid and blessing upon us. But what then should be the reason of it? In plain terms it is nothing else but because men love money, and therefore are loath to spare so much time from their sports or callings, as to go to church to pray to God for what they want, and praise his name for what they have. Let us search into our hearts, and we shall acknow-

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ledge this to be the only reason of it. But it is a very foolish one, for who can bless us but God ?

2. What is the reason that so many neglect the sacrament of the Lord's supper ? Do we not all look upon it as our duty to receive it ? I dare say we do ; Christ himself having commanded it,¹ and it being the only way whereby to manifest ourselves to be Christians ; what then can be the reason of this neglect of it, but merely the love of money, which makes them loath to spend time in preparing and fitting themselves for it ?

But seeing men thus excommunicate themselves by not coming to the communion, in plain terms they deserve to be excommunicated by the censures of the church. And if God should in his providence deprive them of ever having an opportunity of receiving the sacrament again, they must even thank themselves for it. Howsoever this shall be their present punishment, that they shall be deprived of it, until they think it worth their while to come unto it.

3. What is the reason that the sabbath is so profaned ? That so many take their recreations upon the Lord's day, but because they cannot spare time for it from getting money on other days ; thinking the day long, because they can get little in it ?² And why do so many profane the sabbath, while at church, by thinking upon the world, but because they love it ?³

4. What is the reason that charity is so cold, but that the love of money is grown so hot among us ? For do not we all know it is our duty to relieve the poor ? Hath not God expressly commanded

¹ Luke, xxii. 19.

² Amos, viii. 5.

³ Ezek. xxxiii. 1.

it? Hath he not threatened a curse to them that do it not, and promised a blessing to them that do it? What then can be the reason that so many neglect it, but because they love their money more than God?

To these might be added many other sins, which the love of money daily occasions. For what is the reason that many read the Scriptures so seldom and so cursorily as they do? What is the reason that they either have none, or commonly neglect their family duties? that every slight occasion will make them omit their private devotions; that they can find no time to look into their own hearts, to consider their condition, and meditate upon God and Christ, and the world to come?

What is the reason that many know their shops better than their hearts, and are acquainted with the temper of their body more than with the constitution of their souls? that they are so careful and industrious in the prosecution of their worldly designs, so negligent and remiss in looking after heaven? What is or can be the reason of these things, but that inordinate love and affection they have for money, or the things of this world, which makes them so eager in the pursuit of them, that they forget they have any thing else to mind, and so much taken up with worldly business, that God and Christ, and heaven and soul, and all, must give way to it? Oh the folly and madness of sinful men! What a strange, corrupt, and degenerate thing is the heart of man become! that we should be so foolish and unwise, as to prefer our bodies before our souls, earth before heaven, toys and trifles before the eternal God, and the worst of evils

before the best of goods; even sin itself, with all the miseries that attend it, before holiness and that eternal happiness which is promised to it! And all for nothing else but the love of a little pelf and trash, which hath no other worth but what our own distracted fancies put upon it.

And if the love of money be the root of so many sins of omission, how many sins of commission must needs sprout from it? Indeed they are so many, that it would be an endless thing to reckon them all up; and therefore I shall not undertake it, but shall mention only such of them as every one, upon the first reading, shall acknowledge to be the cursed offspring of this one fruitful and big-bellied sin of covetousness, or the love of money; of which Cicero observes, that *nullum est officium tam sanctum atque solemne, quod non avaritia comminuere atque violare soleat*.¹ So we may say on the other side too, that there is no sin so great and horrid, but covetousness will sometimes put men upon it.

Is idolatry a sin? Yea certainly, one of the greatest that any man can be guilty of; and yet nothing can be more plain, than that covetousness, wheresoever it comes, draws it along with it, inso-much that every covetous man is asserted by God himself to be an idolater,² and covetousness to be idolatry itself.³ And the reason is plain; for what is idolatry, but to give that worship to a creature which is due only unto God? But what higher acts of worship can we perform to God, than to love him, and

¹ "There is no duty, however holy and sacred, which avarice does not weaken and violate."

² Eph. v. 5.

³ Col. iii. 5.

to trust in him, which it is certain every covetous man gives to his money, and therefore covetousness is called *philarguria*, 'the love of money.' And we cannot but be all sensible what trust and confidence men are wont to repose in their estates and incomes. But such will say, we do not fall down before our money, nor pray unto it; but they trust on it, and that is infinitely more than bare praying to it: and though they do not bow down before it in their bodies, yet they make all the faculties of their souls to bow down and stoop unto it; they love and desire it; they rejoice and delight in having of it; they are grieved and troubled for nothing so much as the parting with it; nor fear any thing so much as the losing of it.

But they will say again, we do not sacrifice to our bags, nor burn incense to our estates; we never did nor intend to offer so much as a lamb or calf unto it! It is true, they do not; but they offer that which is far better, they offer the poor to it, suffering them to perish with hunger, thirst, and cold, rather than relieve them with that necessary maintenance which God has put into their hands for them: they offer their own bodies to it, exposing them to heats and colds, to dangers and hazards both by sea and land, and all for money; yea, they offer their own souls to it likewise, as a whole burnt-offering, giving them to lie scorching in hell flames to eternity, and that upon no other account but to get money. And tell me which are the greatest fools, and most odious idolaters, such as offer beasts to the sun and flames, or such as offer themselves both soul and body to dirt and clay? We cannot but all acknowledge the latter to be far the worse, and by consequence the covet-

ous man to be the greatest idolater in the world, and that too only because he is a covetous man.

Moreover, is not extortion and oppression a sin? And yet we all know that it is the love of money that is the only cause of it. Is not strife and contention a sin? whence comes it but from our lusting after money?¹ Is not perjury a sin? Is not corruption of justice a sin? Is not cheating and cozenage a sin? Is not pride and haughtiness a sin? Is not unrighteous dealing betwixt man and man a sin? Is not theft and robbery a sin? Is not treason and rebellion a sin? Are not all these sins, and great ones too? But whence spring these poisonous fruits into the lives of men, but from the bitter roots of covetousness in their hearts? It is the love of money that makes these sins to rise amongst us: it is this that makes men forswear themselves, and cozen others; it is this that oft-times makes fathers ruin their children, and children to long for the death of their fathers; it is this that makes neighbours go to law, and brethren themselves to be at variance; it is this that makes men strive to over-reach each other, and to blind the eyes of those they deal with; it is this that hath caused some to murder others, and others to destroy themselves. What shall I say more? There is no impiety that can be committed against God, nor injury that can be offered unto men, but the love of money hath been the cause of it in others, and will be so in us, unless it be timely prevented, and therefore it may well be termed the 'root' of all the evil of sin.

And it being the root from whence all the evil of

¹ James, iv. 1.

sin springs, it must needs be the root of all the evil of punishment and misery too, misery and punishment being the necessary consequent of sin. Indeed this sin carries its misery along with it, as Seneca himself saw by the mere light of nature, saying, *Nulla avaritia sine poena est, quamvis satis sit ipsa poenarum*: "No avarice is without punishment, though it be itself punishment enough." For what a torment is it for a man to be always thirsty, and never able to quench his thirst? Yet this is the misery of every covetous man, whose thirst after money can never be satisfied, and who is desirous of having more, that he can never enjoy with comfort what he hath, loving money so well, that he grudgeth himself the use of it. Hence, the aforesaid author observed, that *in nullum avarus bonus est, in seipsum pessimus*. "The covetous man is good to none, but worst to himself." And as this is the natural consequent of this sin in itself, so it is the ordinary punishment that God inflicts upon men for it, not suffering them to take any pleasure in the use of what they love.¹ And besides that, what cares and fears, what labours and travels, what dangers and hazards doth the love of money put men upon? How do they rack their brains and break their rest to get it; and when it is gotten, what fears are they always in, lest they should lose it again? What grief and trouble do the poor wretches undergo for every petty loss that befalls them? so that every covetous man is not only miserable, but therefore miserable because covetous.

But if their misery be so great in this life, how

¹ Eccl. vi. 1. 2.

great will it be in that to come? Concerning which there are two things to be observed: first, that the very having of riches makes it very difficult to get to heaven.¹ Hence Agur was afraid of them.² Neither do we ever read of any of the patriarchs, prophets, or the saints recorded in Scripture, to have been guilty of this sin, unless Baruch, who was reproved for it.³

And as the having of money makes it difficult to get to heaven, so the loving of it makes it impossible to keep out of hell. For so long as man is covetous, he is liable to every temptation, ready to catch at every bait that the devil throws before him; so that he is led by him as he pleaseth, till at length he be utterly destroyed.⁴ And therefore the same apostle elsewhere tells us, that the covetous have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, but the wrath of God will most certainly fall upon them.⁵ But the wrath of God is the greatest evil of punishment that it is possible for men to bear: indeed it is that which once being incensed makes hell fire. And yet we see that the heat of our love to money will enkindle the flames of God's wrath against us; yea, and such flames too as will never be quenched.⁶ And so for the little seeming transient pleasure they take in getting, or keeping money now, they must live in misery and contempt, in shame and torment for evermore.

Thus, now we see that love of money will not only put us upon the evil of sin, but it will also bring the evil of punishment upon us, both which

¹ Matt. xix. 23, 24, 25; Luke, xvi. 19, 22.

² Prov. xxx. 8. ³ Jer. xiv. 5. ⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 9.

⁵ Eph. v. 5, 6. ⁶ Mark, ix. 44.

the apostle here (ver. 9, 10) imputes to this sin. And therefore he both well may and must be understood of both these sorts of evil, when he saith, that 'the love of money is the root of all evil;' which, the promises considered, I hope none can deny. And need I then heap up more arguments to dissuade men from this sin, and to prevail with them to leave doting upon the world, and loving of money? Is not this one argument of itself sufficient? For is it possible for us to indulge ourselves in this sin, now we know it is the root of all evil? and that if we still love money, there is no sin so great but we may fall into it, and no misery so heavy but it may fall upon us. Surely, if this consideration will not prevail upon us to despise and contemn, rather than to love and desire this world, for my part I know not what can. Only this I know, that so long as men continue in this sin, all writing and preaching will be in vain to them; and so will their hearing be, their going to church, their reading the Scriptures, their hearing them read and expounded to them; all this will signify nothing, this root of all evil is still within us, and will bring forth its bitter fruit, do what we can. And therefore as we desire to profit by what we hear, as ever we desire to avoid any known sin whatsoever, to know by what happiest means to escape either present torment, or eternal misery, as ever we desire to be real saints, and to manifest ourselves to be so, to go to heaven, and live with God and Christ for ever, let not our affections be entangled any longer in the briars and thorns of this lower world; let us beware of loving money. 'If riches increase, let us not set our hearts upon

them,¹ but scorn and despise them hereafter, as much as ever heretofore we have desired or loved them.

But I cannot, I dare not but in charity believe and hope, that by this time my readers are something weaned from their doating upon the present world, and desire to know how they may, for the future, get off their affections from it, so as to have this root of all evil extirpated, and quite plucked up from within them. I hope this is the desire of all, or at least of most of them; and therefore I shall now endeavour to show them how they may infallibly accomplish and effect it. In order thereto,

1. Let such persons often consider with themselves how unsuitable the things of this world are for their affections and love, which were designed only for the chieftest good. When God implanted the affection of love within us, he did not intend it should be the root of all evil, but of all good unto us; and therefore he did not give it us, to place it fondly upon such low and mean objects as this world presents unto us, but that we should love himself with all our hearts and souls.² And surely he infinitely deserves our love more than such trash can do.

2. Let them remember that so long as they love money, they may pretend what they please, they do not love God, nor Christ; and by consequence they have no true religion at all in them.³

3. Let them often read and study our Saviour's sermon upon the mount, where he pronounces the

¹ Psalm, lxii. 10.

² Deut. vi. 5.

³ 1 John, ii. 15; Matt. x. 37; Luke, xiv. 33; James, i. 27.

meek and low, not the rich and mighty, to be blessed; and weigh those strong and undeniable arguments which he brings, to prevail upon us not to take thought for the world, nor trouble our heads about the impertinent concerns of this transient life.¹

4. Let them labour to confirm and strengthen their trust and confidence on the promises of God, who hath assured us, that if we love and fear him, he will take care of us, and provide all things necessary for us.² This is the great argument which the apostle uses.³

5. Let them remember that they are called to higher things than this world is able to afford them: the Christian is a high and heavenly calling; we are called by it, and invited to a kingdom and eternal glory,⁴ and therefore ought not to spend our time about such low and paltry trash as riches and wealth.

6. Let them get above the world, let their conversation be in heaven, and then they will soon look down upon all things here below as beneath their concern, *Vilescent temporalia, cum desiderantur æterna*, said St. Gregory. He that seriously thinks upon and desires heaven, cannot but vilify and despise earth. O what fools and madmen do the blessed angels, and the glorified saints in heaven, think us poor mortals upon earth to be, when they see us busying ourselves about getting a little refined dirt, and in the meanwhile neglecting the most transcendent glories which themselves enjoy, although they be offered to us!

7. Let them never suffer the vanity of all things

¹ Matt. v. 3, 4; vi. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

² Matt. vi. 33.

³ Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

⁴ 1 Thes. ii. 12.

here below to go out of their minds; but remember still, that get what they can, it is but vanity and vexation of spirit, as Solomon himself asserted upon his own experience, though he, be sure, had more than any of us are likely to enjoy. And let them not only often repeat the words, but endeavour to get themselves convinced thoroughly of the truth of them, which their own experience, duly weighed and rightly applied, will soon do.

8. Let it be their daily prayer to almighty God, that he would take off their affections from the world, and incline them to himself, as David did, saying, ‘Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’¹

To all these means, let them add the constant and serious consideration of what they have here read, that the love of money is the root of all evil; assuring themselves, that if they will not believe it now, it is not long before they will all find it but too true by their own sad and woful experience, when they shall be stripped of their present enjoyments, and so turn bankrupts in another world, where they will be cast into prison without having a farthing to relieve themselves, or so much as a drop of water to cool their inflamed tongues.

By these and such-like means, none of us but may suppress the love of money in us, which is the root of all evil, and so avoid or prevent all the evil which otherwise will proceed from it. Whether any of my readers will be persuaded to use the means or no, I know not; however, let me tell them, that if they are loath to strive to get their affections deadened to the world, it is an infallible sign that they are too much in love with it, and that this

¹ Psalm cxix. 36.

root and seed of all manner of evil remains in them; nor can it be expected they will be persuaded to any one duty whatsoever, until they are first prevailed upon to do this, even to mortify their lusts and affections to the things of this world. For so long as those are predominant within us, no grace whatsoever can be exerted, nor duty performed, nor any sin avoided by us.

But, oh, how happy would it be, if it should please the most high God to urge what I have here said home upon any, so as to induce them to set themselves seriously for the future to the eradicating or rooting up this love of money out of their hearts! What a holy, what a blessed, what a peculiar people should we then be, and how zealous of good works! Then we should take all opportunities of performing our devotions to almighty God: then we should have as many to the sacrament as at a sermon; then our churches would be filled all the week, as well as on Sundays, and the eternal God constantly worshipped with reverence and godly fear: then we should take delight in clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and relieving the oppressed: then there would be no such thing as cheating and cozenage, as lying and perjury, as strife and contention amongst us. But we should all walk hand and hand together in the work of piety, justice, and charity upon earth, until at length we come to heaven, where we shall be so far from loving and desiring money, that we shall account it, as it is, even dross and dirt; where our affections shall be wholly taken up with the contemplation of the chiefest good, and we shall solace ourselves in the enjoyment of his perfections for evermore.

THOUGHTS UPON WORLDLY RICHES.

SECT. II.

TIMOTHY, after his conversion to the Christian faith, being found to be a man of great parts, learning, and piety, and so every way qualified for the work of the ministry, St. Paul, who had planted a church at Ephesus, the metropolis or chief city of all Asia, left him to dress and propagate it, after his departure from it; giving him power to ordain elders or priests, and to visit and exercise jurisdiction over them, to see they did not teach false doctrines.¹ That they were unblamable in their lives and conversations.² And to exercise authority over them, in case they were otherwise.³ And therefore it cannot in reason but be acknowledged that Timothy was the bishop, superintendent, or visitor of all the Asian churches, as he was always asserted to have been by the fathers of the primitive church, as Eusebius reports, saying, *Τιμόθεος τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ παροικίας ἱσορεῖται πρῶτω τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν εἰληχέναι*, that Timothy is reported to have been the first bishop of the province of Ephesus. Be sure he had the oversight of all the churches that were planted there; and not only in Ephesus itself, but likewise in all Asia, which was subject to his ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction.

And hence it is that the apostle St. Paul, in his first epistle to him, gives him directions how to

¹ 1 Tim. i. 3.² Ib. v. 7.³ Ib. v. 19.

manage so great a work, and to discharge so great a trust as was committed to him, both as bishop and priest; both how to ordain and govern others, and likewise how to preach himself the gospel of Christ. And having spent the whole epistle in directions of this sort, in the close of it, as it were, at the foot of the epistle, he subjoins one general caution to be observed by him: 'Charge them that are rich,' &c. Which words, though first directed to Timothy, were in him intended for all succeeding ministers and preachers of the gospel; such I mean who are solemnly ordained and set apart for this work. We are all obliged to observe the command which is here laid upon us, as without which we are never likely to do any good upon them that hear us: for so long as their minds are set altogether upon riches, and the things of this world, we may preach our hearts out before we can ever persuade them to mind heaven and eternal happiness in good earnest. This St. Paul knew well enough, and therefore hath left this not only as his advice and counsel, but as a strict command and duty incumbent upon the preachers of the gospel in all ages, that they 'charge them that are rich,' &c. Where it must be observed, in the first place, how we are expressly enjoined to 'charge them that are rich,' &c. a word much to be observed. The apostle doth not say, desire, beseech, counsel, or admonish the rich, but *παράγγελλε τοῖς πλουσίοις*, 'charge and command them that are rich.' The word properly signifies such a charge as the judges at an assize or sessions make in the king's name, enjoining his subjects to observe the established laws and statutes of the kingdom. And so the word is always used in Scripture for the strictest way of

commanding any thing to be observed or done, as ‘ Did we not strictly command you.’¹ ‘ He charged him to tell no man.’² Thus therefore it is that we are here enjoined to charge the rich in the name of the King of kings, not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, &c.

And this is the proper notion, and the only true way of preaching the word of God, which therefore in Scripture is ordinarily expressed by the word *kerussein*, which properly signifies to publish or proclaim, as heralds do, the will and pleasure of the prince, and in his name to command the people to observe it. Thus we are enjoined to preach the word of God, by publishing his will and pleasure to men; charging them in his name, to obey and practise it. For we come not to them in our own names, but in his that created and redeemed them; and therefore although we neither have, nor pretend to any power or authority over them, from ourselves, yet by virtue of the commission which we have received from the universal and supreme monarch of the world, we not only lawfully may, but are in duty bound, to charge and enjoin all in his name, to observe what he hath commanded them. Insomuch, that although we pretend not to divine inspiration, or immediate revelations from God, such as the prophets had; yet we, preaching the same word which they did, may, and often ought to use the same authority which they used, saying, as they did, ‘ Thus saith the Lord of hosts;’ for whatsoever is written in the Scriptures, is as certainly God’s word now, as it was when first in-

¹ Οὐ παρηγγελία παρηγγειλαμεν ὑμῖν.—Acts, v. 28.

² Παρήγγειλε αὐτὸ.—Luke, v. 14.

spired or revealed to them. And therefore it cannot be denied, but that we have as much power to charge upon all the observation of what is there written, as they ever had ; we being sent to preach and proclaim the will of God unto all, by the same person as they were. Hence it is that the apostle in the name of God commands Titus, and in him all succeeding ministers of the gospel, to speak or preach the word of God, to exhort and rebuke all with authority.¹ From whence nothing can be more plain, than that it is our duty to preach with authority, as those who have received power from God to make known his will and pleasure to all men ; or as the apostle here expressly words it, to 'charge them not to be high-minded,' and the like.

But this I fear may be a very ungrateful subject to many, and therefore I should not have insisted so long upon it, but that there is a kind of necessity for it. For I verily believe, that the non-observance of this hath been, and still is, the principal reason why people receive so little benefit by hearing of sermons as they usually do : for they look upon sermons only as popular discourses, rehearsed by one of their fellow-creatures, which they may censure, approve, or reject, as themselves see good. And we ourselves, I fear, have been too faulty, or at least remiss, in this particular ; in that when we preach, we ordinarily make a long harangue or oration concerning some point in polemical, dogmatical, or practical divinity, and use only some moral persuasions to press upon our auditors the observance of what we say, without interposing or

¹ Tit. ii. 15.

exercising the authority which is committed to us, so as to charge them in the name of the most high God, to observe and practise, what we declare and prove unto them to be his will, and by consequence their duty. But for my own part, did I think that preaching consisted only in explaining some points in divinity, and using only moral arguments to persuade men to perform their duty to God and man, I should not think it worth my while to do it, because I could not expect to do any good at all by it. For all the moral arguments in the world can never be so strong to draw us from sin, as our natural corruptions are to drive us into it. And therefore we can never expect to do any good upon men, either by our logic, or rhetoric; but our arguments must be fetched from on high, even from the eternal God himself, or else they are never likely to profit or prevail upon them. We must charge and command them in God's name, or else we had as good say nothing.

It is true, did we, who preach God's word, propose nothing else to ourselves, but to tickle men's ears and please their fancies, and so to ingratiate ourselves into their love and favour, it would be easy to entertain them with discourses of another nature, stuffed with such fine words, quaint phrases, and high notions, as would be very pleasing and acceptable unto them. But I must take leave to say, that we dare not do it; for we know that as our auditors must give an account of their hearing, so it is not long before we must also give an account of our preaching too; for so God himself hath told us beforehand by his apostle.¹ But how

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

shall we be able to look the eternal God in the face, yea or to look our auditors in the face at that time, if instead of charging their duty upon them, in order to their eternal salvation, we should put them off with general discourses, which signifying nothing, only to please and gratify them whilst we remain with them? No, we dare not do it, and therefore I wish men would not expect it from us; for we must not hazard our own eternal salvation, to gain their temporal favour and applause. And therefore seeing God hath been pleased to entrust us so far with men's souls, as to direct them in the way to eternal life; howsoever they resent it, we are bound in duty, both to God, to them, and ourselves, to deal plainly with them, and to use the authority which he hath here committed to us, where he hath expressly commanded us in his name, to 'charge them that are rich in this world,' &c.

Where I desire the reader to observe in the next place, that we of the clergy are not only empowered to charge the poorer, or meaner sort of people, who, by reason of their extreme poverty and want, may seem inferior to us, but even rich men too; 'charge them,' saith the apostle, 'that are rich in this world.' And the reason is, because we come unto them in his name, who gives them all the riches they do enjoy, and can take them away again when he himself pleaseth; so that he can make the poor rich, and the rich poor, when he pleaseth; and therefore the poor and rich are all alike to him; his power and authority is the same over both; and therefore we, coming in his name, are ordered to make no distinction, but to charge the one as well as the other; yea, here we are particularly commanded, to 'charge them that are rich.'

Which is the next thing to be considered in these words, even whom the apostle means by them that 'are rich in this world?' Which is a question that needs a serious resolution. For many men, not thinking themselves as yet to be rich enough, will be apt to conclude from thence that they are not to be reckoned amongst those whom the apostle here calls 'rich in this world.' But whatsoever they may think of themselves, I believe there are but few, except the very poor, who in a Scripture sense are not rich men; for whatsoever any have over and above their necessary maintenance, that the Scriptures call riches, as is plain from Agur's wish, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.'¹ From whence it is easy to observe, that as nothing but the want of convenient food is poverty: so whatsoever a man hath over and above his own convenient or necessary food, is properly his riches; and so he that hath it, is in a Scripture sense a rich man, and is therefore called here in my text *πλούσιος, quasi πολυούσιος*, one that hath much substance, or more than he hath necessary occasion for. And therefore, although some may be richer than others, yet I believe the generality may justly be reckoned in the number of rich men here spoken of; at least all such as, by the blessing of God, have not only what is necessary for their present maintenance, but likewise something to spare, and so may all come under the notion of those whom we are here commanded to charge not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, &c.

Having thus considered the authority which we

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

are here commanded to exert, and the object, the rich of this world, we are now to consider the subject-matter, what that is which we are commanded to charge upon them; but that is here expressly set down in several particulars, all which I shall endeavour to explain as they lie in order.

I. That they 'be not high-minded;' a necessary caution for rich men. For riches are very apt to puff men up with vain and foolish conceits of themselves, so as to think themselves to be so much the better, by how much they are richer than other people; but this is a grand mistake, which we are here enjoined to use the utmost of our power and skill to rectify, by 'charging them that are rich not to be high-minded;' that is, not to think highly and proudly of themselves, because they are richer or wealthier than other men, but to be every way as humble in their own eyes, and as lowly-minded in the enjoyment of all temporal blessings, as if they enjoyed nothing; as considering, 1. How much soever they have, they are no way really the better for it.

1st. Not in their souls; they are never the wiser nor holier, nor more acceptable unto God, by their being rich.¹

2dly. Nor in their bodies; they are never the stronger, nor healthier, nor freer from pain and trouble, nor yet longer lived than others.

3dly. Nor in their minds; their consciences are never the quieter, their hearts never the freer from cares and fears, neither can they sleep better than other people.²

4thly. Nor yet in their estate and condition.

¹ Eccl. ix.; 1 Job, xix.

² Eccl. v. 12.

First. Not in this life. For riches can never satisfy them, nor by consequence make them happy; but they may still be as miserable in the enjoyment, as in the want of all things.¹

Secondly. Nor yet in the life to come; they are never the nearer heaven, by being higher upon earth; their gold and silver can never purchase an inheritance for them in the land of Canaan.²

2. They are so far from being better, that they are rather much worse for their having abundance here below.

1st. They have more temptations to sin, to luxury, to covetousness, to the love of this world, to the neglect of their duty to God, to pride and self-conceit, to security and presumption.³

2dly. It is harder for them to get to heaven, than it is for others; and, by consequence, the richer they are, the more danger they are in of being miserable for ever.⁴ Whence our Saviour himself denounceth a woe upon them that are rich,⁵ and James bids them 'weep and howl for their miseries.' And therefore advises us to rejoice rather at poverty than riches.⁶ Now these things being considered as spoken by God himself, none can deny but that the rich are certainly in a worse condition than the poor; and by consequence, that men have no cause to be proud or high-minded, nor to glory in their riches.⁷ And therefore, whatsoever outward blessings God hath bestowed upon us, 'Let us not be high-minded but fear.'⁸

II. Nor 'trust in uncertain riches,' which I con-

¹ Eccl. v. 11.

² Jam. iii. 5.

³ Luke, xii. 19.

⁴ Matt. xix. 23.

⁵ Luke, vi. 24.

⁶ Jam. v. 1; i. 9, 10.

⁷ Jer. ix. 23.

⁸ Rom. xi. 20.

fess is a very hard lesson for a rich man to learn, nothing being more difficult than to have riches, and not to trust in them; as our Saviour himself intimates, in explaining the one by the other, as things very rarely severed.¹ But certainly it is altogether as foolish a thing to trust in riches, as it is to be proud of them. For,

1. They of themselves can stand us in no stead, they cannot defend us from any evil, nor procure us any good: they cannot of themselves either feed us, or clothe us, or refresh us, or be any ways advantageous to us, without God's blessing.² How much less can they be able to deliver us from the wrath to come? No, we may take it for a certain truth, our riches may much further our eternal misery, but they can never conduce any thing to our future happiness.

2. If we trust in them, be sure they will fail us, and bring us to eternal misery and desolation; for to trust in any thing but God is certainly one of the highest sins we can be guilty of; it is in plain terms idolatry, 'He that trusteth in riches is sure to fall.'³ For this is to deny God.⁴

3. They are but uncertain riches; 'they make themselves wings and fly away.'⁵ They are in continual motion, ebbing and flowing, and never continuing in one stay. So that you are never sure of keeping them one day; and what reason then can we have to trust on them? especially considering that they are not only uncertain, but uncertainty itself, as the word here signifies, 'trust not in the uncertainty of riches.'

¹ Mark, x. 23, 24. ² Prov. xi. 4. ³ Ibid. xi. 28.

⁴ Job. xxxi, 24, 25, 28.

⁵ Prov. xxiii. 5.

But in the living God ; He, he is to be the only object of our trust, whether we have, or have not any thing else to trust on ; or to speak more properly, there is nothing that we can, upon good grounds make our trust and confidence, but only him who governs and disposeth of all things according to his own pleasure. So that it is he, and he alone that giveth us all things richly to enjoy. It is not our wit or policy, it is not our strength or industry, it is not our trading and trafficking in the world, it is none but God that giveth us what we have.¹ And as it is he that maketh men rich, so he can make them poor again, when he himself pleaseth ; and they have cause to fear he will do so too, unless they observe what is charged upon them.

There are four duties still behind, which we are here commanded to charge all those who are rich to observe.

I. 'That they do good.' In treating of which I might show the several qualifications required to the making up of an action good ; as that the matter of it must be good, as commanded, or at least allowed by God : that the manner of performing it be good, as that it be done obediently, understandingly, willingly, cheerfully, humbly, and sincerely : and that the end be good too, so as that it be directed ultimately to the glory of God. But not to insist upon that now, I shall only consider what kind of good works the rich are here commanded to do, as they are rich men. And they are two, works of piety, and works of charity.

1. They are here commanded to do works of

¹ Deut. viii. 18 ; Prov. x. 22.

piety ; where by works of piety, I mean, not their loving, and fearing, and honouring of God, nor yet their praying to him, their hearing his word, or praising his name, for such works of piety as these the poorest as well as the richest persons amongst us are bound to do ; whereas the apostle here speaks only of such works as they who are rich are bound to do, upon that account, because they are so. And therefore by works of piety here, I understand such works as tend to the honour of his name, to the performance of worship and homage to him, to the encouragement of his ministers, the propagating of his gospel, and the conversion of sinners to him ; all which they are bound to do, to the utmost of their power, out of the estates, which for these purposes he hath entrusted with them. For thus they are expressly commanded to honour the Lord with their substance, or riches, and with the first fruits of all their increase.¹ And the reason is, because God is the universal Proprietor, the head Landlord of all the world, and we have nothing but what we hold under him ; neither are we any more than tenants at will to him, who may fine us at his own pleasure, or throw us out of possession whensoever he sees good. Now lest we should forget this, even upon what tenure it is that we hold our estates, God hath enjoined us to pay him, as it were, a quit-rent or tribute out of what we possess, as an acknowledgment that it is by his favour and blessing alone that we do possess it. So that whatsoever we do, or are able to offer him, is but a due debt which we owe him ; which if we neglect to pay him, we lose our tenure, and forfeit what we

¹ Prov. iii. 9.

have to the Lord of the manor, the supreme possessor of the world. Hence it is, that in all ages, they who were truly pious, and had a due sense of God upon their hearts, were always very careful to pay their homage unto God; insomuch that many of them never thought they could give enough to any pious use, wherein to testify their acknowledgment of God's dominion over them, and his right and property in what they had. A noble instance whereof we have in the children of Israel; for when the tabernacle was to be built for the service and worship of God, they were so far from being backward in contributing towards it, that they presently brought more than could be used in the building of it.¹ So it was too in the building of the temple, which David and the chiefs or nobles of Israel made great preparation for.² And that they did this, thereby to acknowledge God to be the Lord and giver of all, is plain from the following words.³ The same was also observed in the builders of the second temple, as the raising the first out of its rubbish, wherein it had lain for many years. And as for Christians, I need not tell you how forward those who have been truly pious, have always been in doing such works of piety, since most of the churches in Christendom, or be sure in this nation, have been erected by particular persons. And it is very observable, that the more eminent any place or age hath been for piety and devotion, the more pious works have been always done in it, for the service and worship of almighty God; which plainly shows, that where

¹ Exod. xxxvi. 5, 6, 7.

² 1 Chron. xxix. 6, 7, 8.

³ Ib. ver. 11, 12, 13.

such works are wanting, whatsoever pretences they may make, there is no such thing as true piety, and the fear of God. And therefore, as ever we desire to manifest ourselves to be what we profess, true Christians indeed, men fearing God and hating covetousness, we must take all opportunities to express our thankfulness unto God for what we have, by devoting as much as we can of it to his service and honour.

2. Besides these works of piety towards God, the rich are enjoined also works of charity towards the poor; which though they have an immediate reference to the poor, yet God looks upon them as given to himself.¹ Hence it is that God accepts of such works of these also, for part of the tribute which we owe him; whereby we acknowledge the receipt of what we have from him, and express our thankfulness unto him for it, without which we have no ground to expect a blessing upon what we have, nor that it should be really good to us: for, as the apostle tells us, 'every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving,'² not else. But no thanksgiving is acceptable but that which is expressed by works as well as words. And therefore it is necessary for us to pay this duty and service to God, out of what we have, in order to the cleansing and sanctifying the residue of our estates unto us, without which we have not the lawful use of what we possess, but every thing we have is polluted and unclean to us, as our Saviour himself intimates.³ A thing much to be considered. For I verily believe that the great reason

¹ Prov. xiv. 31; xix. 17; Matt. xxv. 40.

² 1 Tim. iv. 4.

³ Luke, xi. 41.

why so many estates are blasted so soon, and brought to nothing amongst us, is because men do not render unto God their duty and tribute out of what they have; and therefore it is no wonder that God in his providence turns them out of their possession, and gives their estates to other persons who shall be better tenants to him, and be careful to pay him the duties which he requires of them. And therefore, in order to men's securing their estates to themselves and posterity, it is absolutely necessary that they observe the duty which we are here recommended to charge upon all that are rich in this world, even to do good with what they have; and not only so, but,

II. To be 'rich in good works;' that is, not only to do good, but to do as much good as they are able with their riches, so as to proportion their good works to the riches which God hath given them wherewith to do them, according to the apostle's directions.¹ Thus, in the place before quoted, where our Saviour bids the Pharisees to 'give alms of such things as they have,' his words are, 'give alms as you are able,'² for so the words properly signify. And verily, whatsoever we do, unless it be as much as we can, God will not look upon us as doing any thing at all: for we must not think to compound with him. When he hath given us all we have, he expects that we render all that he requires of us, that is, as much as we are able to pay unto him. As if a man owes you money, you will not accept of part instead of the whole; so neither will God from us; we all owe him as much

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

² Τὰ ἐνόντα δότε τῷ ἐλεημοσύνην.—Luke, xi. 41.

as we are able to devote to his service and honour, and we must not think to put him off with part of it; for he reckons that he receives nothing from us, unless it be proportionable to what he hath bestowed upon us. But how little soever it is that we give or offer to him, if it be but answerable to our estates, it will be accepted by him. This our Saviour himself hath assured us of.¹ From whence we may certainly conclude, that there is not the poorest person whatsoever, but may be as rich in good works as the richest, because God doth not measure the goodness of our works by their bulk or quantity, but by the proportion which they bear to our estates; so that he who gives a penny, may do as good a work as he who gives a pound; yea, and a better too, because his may be as much as he is able, whereas the other's is not: I wish all men may seriously weigh and consider this, lest otherwise they go out of the world without ever having done one good work in it: for we may assure ourselves, he that is not thus rich in good works, doth no good at all with his riches.

But it is further to be considered here, that this expression, 'rich in good works,' implies that good works are indeed our principal riches; and that men must not compute their riches so much from what they have, as from what they give and devote to God. For what we have is not ours, but God's in our hands, but what we give is ours in God's hands, and he acknowledgeth himself our debtor for it, in that he tells us that we lend it to him, and promiseth to pay it to us again.² And therefore they who cast up their accounts to know how rich

¹ Matt. xii. 43, 44.

² Prov. xix. 17.

they are, ought not to reckon upon what they have lying by them, nor upon their houses and lands that are made over to them, nor yet upon what is owing to them by men; but should reckon only upon what they have given to pious and charitable uses, upon what treasure they have laid up in heaven. For whatsoever they may think at present, I dare assure them, that will be found to be their only riches another day. And therefore if any one desires to be rich indeed, let him take my advice, do what good he can with the riches he hath, and then he will be rich enough; for this is the way to be rich in good works. But in order unto that, he must likewise observe what follows: to be

III. Ready to distribute; that is, ready upon all occasions to pay his tribute unto God, whensoever he in his providence calls for it; taking all opportunities of doing good, and glad when he can find them.¹ Thus therefore whensoever any opportunities present themselves of expressing our thankfulness unto God, by works either of piety or charity, whatsoever other business may be neglected we must be sure to lay hold on that. For I dare say, that there is none but will grant me, that there is all the reason in the world that God should be served in the first place, and that he should have the first fruits of all our increase.² And therefore we cannot but acknowledge, that works of piety towards God, and of charity to the poor, or as the Scripture calls them in general, good works, are always to be done in the first place; and whatsoever other works may be omitted, be sure they

¹ Gal. vi. 7.

² Prov. iii. 9; Exod. xxiii. 19; Deut. xxvi. 2.

must not. But we ought still to be as ready to pay our duties unto God, as we are to receive any thing from him, as ready to give as to receive; and by consequence as men let no opportunities slip wherein they can increase their estates, they are much less to let any opportunities pass wherein they can any way improve their estates for God's glory and other's good; that they ought to be ready upon all occasions to distribute what they can upon charitable and pious uses.

IV. Willing to communicate. As we must do it with a ready hand, so we must do it with a willing heart too. Thus we are enjoined to serve God willingly, and cheerfully.¹ Indeed God accepts of none but free-will offerings. If we be not as willing to do good works as we are to have wherewith to do them, we may be confident God will never accept of them. And therefore in plain terms, if any would be rich in good works as becometh Christians, and as it is our interest to be, they must not stay till they be compelled, persuaded, or entreated by others to do them; but they must set upon them of their own accord, out of pure obedience unto God, and from a due sense of their constant dependence upon him, and manifest obligations to him; yea, so as to take pleasure in nothing in the world so much as in paying their respects and service to Almighty God.²

Now to encourage the rich to employ their estates thus in doing good, the apostle adds in the last place, that this is the way to 'lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that

¹ 1 Chron. xxviii. 6; Cor. ix. 6, 7.

² 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 15, 17.

they may lay hold on eternal life.' A strange expression ! yea, such an one, that had not St. Paul himself spake it, some would have been apt to have excepted against it for an error or mistake. What, good works the foundation of eternal life ? No, that is not the meaning of it ; but that good works are the foundation of that blessed sentence which they shall receive who are made partakers of eternal life, as is plain from our Saviour's own words.¹

And verily, although there be no such intrinsic value in good works, whereby they that do them can merit any thing from God by their doing of them ; yet nothing can be more certain, than that God, of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, will so accept of them as to reward us for them in the world to come. For this our Saviour himself doth clearly intimate to us in the place before quoted ; as also, that is, distribute and employ the unrighteous or deceitful riches you have in this world in such a way as is most pleasing and acceptable unto God, that so he may be your friend, and receive you into everlasting habitations, when these transient and unstable riches fail you.² From whence I beg leave to observe, that to do good with what we have, is the only way whereby to improve our estates for own good, so as to be the better for them both in this and also in the world to come. The Rabbins have a good saying, that מלח ממון צדקה, good works are the salt of riches, that which preserves them from corruption and makes them savoury and acceptable unto God, as also useful and profitable to the owners : unless we do good

¹ Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36.

² Matt. vi. 20; Luke, xii. 33 ; xvi. 9.

with our estates, we forfeit our title to them by the non-payment of the rent-charge which God hath reserved to himself upon them; and therefore we may justly expect every moment to be cast out of possession; or howsoever though he may forbear us a while, yea, so long as we are in this world, what good, what benefit, what comfort shall we have of our estates in the world to come? Certainly no more than the rich man in the gospel had when he lay scorching in hell fire, and had not so much as a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. Whereas on the other side, if we do good with our estates, if we devote them to the service of God, and to the relief of the poor, by this means we shall not only secure the possession of them to ourselves here, but shall also receive comfort and benefit from them in the world to come; so that our estates will not die with us, but we shall receive benefit by them, and have cause to bless God for them unto all eternity; the apostle himself assuring us, that by this means we shall 'lay up for ourselves a good foundation for the time to come, so as to lay hold on eternal life.'

This one argument being duly weighed, I hope I need not use any more to persuade men to do good with what they have, and to make the best use of it they can. For I know I write to Christians, at least to such as profess themselves to be so; and therefore to such as believe there is another world besides this we live in, and by consequence that it concerns them to provide for that, which, as I have shown, we may do in a plentiful manner, by the right improvement of what God hath entrusted with us in this world. What then do the generality of men mean to be so slack and remiss

in laying hold of all opportunities of doing good ! What, do they think it possible to lose any thing they do for God ? or do they think it possible to employ their estates better than for his service and honour who gave them to us ! I cannot believe they think so ; and therefore must needs advise the rich, again and again, not to lay up their talents in a napkin, but to use their estates to the best advantage for God and their own souls ; so that when they go from hence into the other world, they may be received into eternal glory, with a ‘ Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into your Master’s joy.’

But fearing lest these moral persuasions may not prevail so much upon my readers as I desire they might, they must give me leave further to tell them, that I am here commanded to charge them that are rich in this world, to be rich also in good works : and therefore, seeing, as I have shown, there are few but who in a Scripture sense are rich in this world ; in obedience to this command which is here laid upon me, in the name of the most high God, I charge you, and not I only, but the eternal God himself, he wills and requires all those whom he hath blessed with riches in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but that they put their whole trust and confidence only in the living God, whose all things are, and who gives us whatsoever we have : that they do good with what he hath put into their hands, laying it out upon works of piety towards him, and of charity to the poor, that his worship may be decently performed, and the poor liberally relieved ; that they be rich in good works, striving to excel each other in doing good in their genera-

tion ; that they be ready every moment to distribute, and always willing to communicate to every good work, wherein they can pay their homage, and express their thankfulness to him for what they have.

THOUGHTS UPON SELF-DENIAL.

THE most glorious sight, questionless, that was ever to be seen upon the face of the earth, was to see the Son of God here, to see the supreme Being and Governor of the world here ; to see the Creator of all things conversing here with his own creatures ; to see God himself with the nature and in the shape of man, walking about upon the surface of the earth ; and discoursing with silly mortals here ; and that with so much majesty and humility mixed together, that every expression might seem a demonstration that he was both God and man. It is true, we were not so happy as to see this blessed sight ; howsoever, it is our happiness that we have heard of it, and have it so exactly described to us, that we may as clearly apprehend it as if we had seen it : yea, our Saviour himself hath pronounced those in a peculiar manner blessed, ‘ who have not seen, and yet have believed ;’¹ that is, who never saw Christ in the manger, nor in the temple, who never saw him prostrate before his Father in the

¹ John, xx. 29.

garden, nor fastened by men unto his cross ; who never saw him preaching the gospel nor working miracles to confirm it ; who never saw him before his passion, nor after his resurrection ; and do as firmly believe whatsoever is recorded of him, as if they had seen it with their eyes. Such persons our blessed Saviour himself asserts to be truly blessed, as having such a faith as is the substance of things hoped for, and ‘ the evidence of things not seen.’¹

Hence therefore, although we lived not in our Saviour’s time, and therefore saw him not do as never man did, nor heard him speak as never man spake, we may notwithstanding be as blessed, or rather more blessed than they that did ; if we do but give credit to what is asserted of him, and receive and believe what is represented to us in his holy gospels, where by faith we may still see him working miracles, and hear him declaring his will and pleasure to his disciples, as really as if we had then been by him. And therefore whatever we read in the gospel that he spake, we are to hearken as diligently to it, as if we heard him speak it with our own ears, and be as careful in the performance of it, as if we had received it from his own mouth ; for so we do, though not immediately, yet by the infallible pen of them that did so. And seeing he never spake in vain or to no purpose, nor suffered an idle or superfluous word to proceed out of his sacred and divine mouth ; whatsoever he asserted, we are to look upon as necessary to be believed, because he asserted it. And whatsoever he commanded, we are to look upon as necessary to be

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

observed, because he hath commanded it; for we must not think that his assertions are so frivolous, or his commands so impertinent, that it is no great matter whether we believe the one and obey the other or no: no, if we expect to be justified and saved by him, he expects to be believed and obeyed by us, without which he will not look upon us as his disciples, nor by consequence as Christians, but as strangers and aliens to him, whatsoever our professions and pretences are.

It is true, we live in an age wherein Christianity in the general notion of it is highly courted, and all sects and parties amongst us making their pretences to it; whatsoever opinions or circumstances they differ in, be sure they all agree in the external profession of the Christian religion, and by consequence in the knowledge that they ought to be Christians indeed. But I fear that men are generally mistaken about the notion of true Christianity, not thinking it to be so high and divine a thing as really it is; for if they had true and clear conceptions of it, they would never fancy themselves to be Christians, upon such low and pitiful grounds as usually they do, making as if Christianity consisted in nothing else, but in the external performance of some few particular duties, and in adhering to them that profess it; whereas Christianity is a thing of a much higher and far more noble nature, than such would have it; insomuch, that did we but rightly understand it, methinks we could not but be taken with it, so as to resolve for the future, to the utmost of our power, to live up to it; to which could I be an instrument of persuading any, how happy should I think myself! Howsoever it is my duty to endeavour it, and for that purpose I

shall now clear up the true notion of Christianity, that we may know, not what it is to be professors of Christianity, but what it is to be real Christians, and true disciples of Christ Jesus, such as Christ will own for his in another world.

Now to know whom Christ will accept for his disciples, our only way is to consult Christ himself, and to consider what it is that he requires of those that follow him, in order to be his disciples; a thing as easily understood, as it is generally disregarded; for nothing can be more plain, than that Christ requires and enjoins all those that would be his disciples, to observe not only some few, but all the commands that he hath laid upon us. 'Ye are my friends,' saith he, and therefore, my disciples, 'if ye do whatsoever I command you.'¹ So that unless we do whatsoever he commands us, we are so far from being his disciples, that we are indeed his enemies. Nay, they that would be his disciples, must excel and surpass all others in virtue and good works. 'Herein,' saith he, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples,'² yea, and continue in them too.³ He tells us also, that they that would be his disciples, 'must love him above all things;' or rather, hate all things in comparison of him.⁴ And 'that they love one another, as he hath loved them.'⁵ To name no more; read but St. Matthew, xvi. 24, and there you may see what it is to be a Christian indeed, or what it is that Christ requires of those who would be his disciples. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross,

¹ John. xv. 14. ² Ibid. xv. 8. ³ Ibid. viii. 31.

⁴ Luke, xiv. 26.

⁵ John, xiv. 35.

and follow me.' Did we but understand the true meaning of these words, and order our conversation accordingly, we should both know what it is to be true Christians, and really to be so ourselves. For I think there is nothing that Christ requires of those who desire to be his disciples, but we should perform it, could we but observe what is here commanded: which that we may all do, I shall endeavour to give the true meaning of them, and of every particular in them as they lie in order.

For, saith he, 'If any man will come after me,' that is, if any man will be my disciple; for masters ye know use to go before scholars, and disciples to follow after. And our Saviour here speaks of himself under the notion of a master, that hath disciples coming after him, and saith, if any man would be one of his disciples so as to go after him, 'he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him.' So that here are three things which our blessed Saviour requires of those that would be his disciples, and by consequence of us who profess to be so; for I dare say there is none of us but desire to be a Christian, or at least to be thought so; for we all know and believe Jesus Christ to be the only Saviour of mankind; that none can save us but he, and that there is none of us but he can save; and that all those who truly come to him for pardon and salvation, shall most certainly have it: hence it is that we would all be thought at least so wise, and to have so much care of our own souls as to go after Christ and be his disciples. I hope there are but few but who really desire to be so. Yet I would not have any think that it is so easy a matter to be a disciple of Christ, or a real and true Christian, as the world would make it: no, we

may assure ourselves, that as it is the highest honour and happiness we can attain unto, so we shall find it the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it; not in its own nature, but by reason of its contrariety to our natural temper and inclinations. For here we see what it is our blessed Saviour requires of those that would go after him, even nothing less than to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him. All which are far greater things than at the first sight, or reading, they may seem to be.

For first, saith he, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,' which being the first thing which Christ requires of those that go after him, it is necessary that we search more narrowly into the nature of it. For if we fail in this, we cannot but fail in all the rest. And therefore, for the opening of this, I shall not trouble the reader with the various expositions, and the divers opinions of learned men concerning these words, but only remind him in general, that the self-denial here spoken of is properly opposed to self-love, or that corrupt and vicious habit of the soul, whereby we are apt to admire and prefer our own fancies, wills, desires, interests, and the like, before Christ himself, and what he is pleased either to promise to us, or require of us. And therefore, when he commands us to deny ourselves, his will and pleasure in general is this, that we do not indulge, or gratify ourselves in any thing that stands in opposition to, and comes in competition with, his interest in the world, or ours in him, howsoever near and dear it may be unto us. But to deny ourselves whatsoever is pleasing to ourselves, if it be not so to God and Christ too, so as not to live to

ourselves but only unto him that died for us, to live as those who are none of our own, but are bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God both in our souls and in our bodies, which are his.¹ But seeing this is not only the first lesson to be learned by Christ's disciples, but that which is necessarily required in order to whatsoever else he commands from us, I shall show you more particularly what it is in yourselves that you are to deny.

1. You must deny your own reasons in matters of divine revelation, so as to use them no further than only to search into the grounds and motives that we have to believe them to be revealed by God. For this being either proved or supposed, we are not to suffer our reasons to be too curious in searching into them, but believe them upon the word and testimony of God himself, who is the supreme truth, or verity itself.

For we who by all our art and cunning cannot understand the reasons of the most common and obvious things in nature, must not think to comprehend the great mysteries of the gospel, which, though they be not contrary to our reasons, are infinitely above them: 'For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'² So that to the understanding of the things of the Spirit, or which the Spirit of God hath revealed to us, there is a great deal more required than what we have by nature, even the supernatural assistance of the Spirit himself that revealed them. And therefore, 'if any man

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

² Ib. ii. 14.

amongst us seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise;'¹ that is, he that would be wise unto salvation, must look upon himself as a fool, as one incapable by nature of understanding the things that belong unto his everlasting peace, without both the revelation and assistance of God himself; and therefore must not rely upon his own judgment, but only upon God's testimony in what he doth believe, not believing what his reason, but what God's word tells him; looking upon it as reason enough why he should believe it, because God hath said it.

I know this is a hard doctrine to flesh and blood. For, as Job tells us, 'vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt,'² Though by nature we be never so foolish, vain, and ignorant, understanding the great mysteries of the gospel, no more than a wild ass's colt doth a mathematical demonstration, yet howsoever we would fain be thought very wise men: yea so wise as to be able to comprehend matters of the highest, yea of an infinite nature, within the narrow compass of our finite and shallow capacities. But this is that which we must deny ourselves in, if we desire to be Christ's disciples, so as to acquiesce in his word, and believe what he asserts, only because he asserts it, without suffering our reason to interpose, but looking upon his word as more than all the reasons and arguments in the world besides.

2. You must deny your own wills. Our wills, it is true, at first were made upright and perfect, every way correspondent to the will of God himself, so as to will what he wills, that is, what is

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 18.

² Job, xi. 12.

really good ; and to nill what he nills, that is, what is really evil. But being now perverted, and corrupted with sin, our wills are naturally inclined to the evil which they should be averse from, and averse from the good which they should be inclined to. So that instead of choosing the good and refusing the evil, we are generally apt to choose the evil and refuse the good : yet for all that our wills are thus crooked and perverse, we cannot endure to have them crossed or thwarted in any thing, but would needs have our own wills in every thing, so as neither to do any thing ourselves, nor yet have any thing done to us, but just as ourselves will, who will usually just contrary to what we should. But now they that would be Christ's disciples, must not be thus self-willed, but deny themselves the fulfilling of their own wills, when it doth not consist with the will of God to have them fulfilled. This our Lord and master hath taught us by his example as well as precept, saying, ' Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me ; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.'¹ Where we may observe that our blessed Saviour, as man, could not but have a natural averseness from death, as all men by nature have, and that without sin. And though Christ's will, as man, was never so pure and perfect, yet he only submits it to the will of God. He manifested indeed that it was the will of that nature which he had assumed, not to suffer death, saying, ' If it be possible, let this cup pass from me ;' but he shows withal that the will of man must still be subject to the will of God ; and that man, even as

¹ Luke, xxii. 42.

man, must deny his own will, whensoever it runneth not exactly parallel with God's; saying, 'nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.'

And if Christ himself denied his own pure and perfect will, that his Father's might be accomplished, how much more cause have we to deny our wills, which, by nature, are always contrary to his will, yea, and to our own good too, preferring generally that which is evil and destructive to us, before that which is truly good and advantageous for us? And verily a great part of true Christianity consisteth in thus resigning our wills to God's, not minding so much which way our own inclinations bend, as what his pleasure and command is. A notable instance whereof we have in old Eli, who questionless could not but be very willing that the iniquity of his sons might be forgiven, and his family prosper in the world; yet howsoever, when God had manifested his pleasure to him, that his house should be destroyed, he submitted his own wholly unto God's, saying 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.'¹ And whosoever of us would be Christ's disciple indeed, must be sure thus to deny and renounce his own will, whensoever it appears to be contrary unto God's, so as even to will, that not his own will but God's be fulfilled, as our Lord and master himself hath taught us each day to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.' And whosoever hath learned this art of making his own will bow and stoop to God's, hath made a very good progress in the Christian religion, especially in that part of it which requires us to deny ourselves.

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

And seeing we must deny our wills, we must needs deny our affections too, which are indeed nothing else but the several motions of the will towards good and evil ; but usually they are so disorderly and irregular, as to place themselves upon objects directly opposite to what they were designed for ; for that we ordinarily love what we ought to hate, and hate what we ought to love ; desire what we ought to abhor, and abhor what we ought to desire ; rejoice in those things which we ought to grieve for, and are grieved at such things which we ought to rejoice in : so that if we suffer our affections to move according to their natural tendency and corrupt inclinations, we shall be so far from going after Christ, that we shall continually be running from him. And therefore it must be our great care and study to bridle our affections, deny them their unlawful, and fix them upon their proper objects ; yea, and to deny ourselves too the lawful use of such things as our affections are apt to be unlawfully placed upon. As for example ; it is lawful, yea, our duty to love our relations, but if our love to them becomes exorbitant, so as to love them more than God, our love to them must be turned into hatred in comparison of our love to him.¹ And whatsoever lawful thing it is that we take pleasure in, if once we find that our pleasure in that extinguisheth, or but damps that pleasure which we used, or ought to have in God, we are to deny ourselves such pleasures as these are, and rather despise ourselves than God.

Yea, we must deny ourselves moreover the use

¹ Luke, xiv. 26.

and enjoyment of our estates and earthly possessions, whensoever they come into competition with his glory; so that if it comes to that point, that we must either leave our estates to enjoy Christ, or leave Christ to enjoy our estates, we must be willing and ready, without any more ado, to abandon and renounce whatever else we have rather than our interest in Christ. For indeed he is not worthy to be Christ's disciple that doth not prefer him before all things else; neither he that loves the world at all in comparison of Christ: 'For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'¹ And therefore he that would be Christ's disciple indeed, must fix his heart so fast on Christ, that it must hang loose and indifferent as to all things here below, being no more proud of them, no more delighted in them, no more concerned about them, than as if he had them not. So that though he have all things beside Christ, he must have nothing but him, or at least in comparison of him; yea, be ready to part with all, that he may gain Christ. And though many of us may think this a hard saying, we may assure ourselves, it is no more than what we must do, if we desire to be Christ's disciples.²

Furthermore, we must deny ourselves, those sins, especially, and lusts which we have or do still indulge ourselves in; for thus the gospel teacheth you in a particular manner, 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lust.'³ And therefore we in vain pretend to be true Christians so long as we live in any one known sin with any love unto it, or delight in it. I suppose none of my readers guilty of all sins, and I

¹ John, ii. 15.² Luke, xiv. 33.³ Tit. ii. 12.

fear there are few but live in some. No man but may be naturally averse from some sins, but it is very rare to find one that is inclined to none; for ordinarily every man hath his darling, his beloved sin, his own sin, as David himself once had, though he afterwards kept himself from it.¹ So I fear none of my readers but have some sin, which he may in a peculiar manner call his own, as being that which his thoughts run most upon, and his desires are carried most into, which he labours most after, and takes most pleasure in, which he is most loath to be reprov'd for, and most easily overcome by. Now this and whatsoever other sins any of us are addicted to, we must wholly leave and utterly renounce if ever we desire to be Christ's disciples. And therefore so long as any of us live in any known sin, as in pride or prodigality, in oppression or covetousness, in malice or uncleanness, in drunkenness, uncharitableness, or any other sin whatsoever, we must not think ourselves to be Christians indeed, Christ will never own us for his disciples; for so long as we live in any known sin, it is that sin, not Christ, that is our master; and therefore if we would list ourselves into his service, we must be sure to deny ourselves whatsoever we know to be offensive to him.

There is still another thing behind wherein we must deny ourselves, if we desire to go after Christ; and that is, we must deny and renounce all our self-righteousness, and all hopes and confidence from ourselves, and from what we have done, which I look upon as a very great piece of self-denial; for naturally we are all prone to sacrifice to our

¹ Psal. xviii. 23.

own nets, to burn incense to our own drags, to boast of our own good works, and to pride ourselves with the conceit of our own righteousness. Though we be never so sinful, we would not be thought to be so, but would very fain be counted righteous, not only by men, but by God himself, for something or other which ourselves do ; though when all comes to all, we know not what that should be ; but howsoever the pride of our hearts is such, that we are loath to go out of ourselves to look for righteousness, to be beholden to another for it. And this is the reason that justification by faith in Christ hath had so many adversaries in the world ; mankind in general being so much in love with themselves, and doting upon what themselves do, that they cannot endure to renounce and vilify their own obedience and good works, so much as to think they stand in need of any other righteousness besides their own, as if their own righteousness was so perfect, that God himself could find no fault with it, nor make any exceptions against it, but must needs acknowledge them to be just and righteous persons for it.

Whereas, alas ! there is not the best action that ever a mere mortal did, but if examined by the strict rules of justice, it is as far from being good, yea, so far, that God himself may justly pronounce it evil, and by consequence condemn the person that did it, for doing of it. And therefore I cannot but wonder what it is that any man doth or can do, for which he can in reason be justified before God, our very righteousness being, as the prophet tells, ' but as filthy rags,' and our most holy performances fraught with sin and imperfection, and therefore so far from justifying us, that we may justly

be condemned for them; but this mankind doth not love to hear of, the pride of our hearts being such, that by all means we must have something in ourselves whereof to glory before God himself. But wo be to that person who hath no other righteousness but his own, wherein to appear before the Judge of the whole world; for however specious his actions may seem to men, they will be adjudged sins before the eternal God.

He therefore that would come to Christ, although he must labour after righteousness to the utmost of his power, yet when he has done all, he must renounce it and look upon himself as an unprofitable servant: 'For Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:'¹ that is, he came not to call such persons as think they have righteousness enough of their own to serve their turns, for such persons think they have no need of him, and therefore it would be in vain to call them; but he calls sinners, such as may perhaps be as righteous as the others, but they do not think themselves to be so, but look upon themselves as undone for ever, unless they have something else to trust to, than their own good works and obedience to the moral law. Such persons therefore Christ came to call; and if they come to him, they cannot but find rest and righteousness in him; and if any of us desire to go after Christ, so as to be his disciple, we must be sure to look upon ourselves as sinners, as deserving nothing but wrath and vengeance for whatsoever we have done; we must renounce all our own righteousness, and be so far from depending upon it, as to think we have none to depend upon, for so

¹ Matt. ix. 13.

really we have not. And when we have laid aside all thoughts of our own righteousness, as to the matter of justification before God, then and not till then, shall we be rightly qualified to embrace another's, even that righteousness which is by faith in Christ. Thus St. Paul, though he had as much, yea more reason to trust in the flesh or in himself than others; for himself saith, 'that as touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless;' 'yet,' saith he, 'what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'¹ Thus, therefore, it is that all those must do who desire to be as St. Paul was, real disciples of Jesus Christ; as we must forsake our sins, so we must renounce our righteousness too. It is true, this is a great and difficult part of self-denial, thus to deny ourselves all that pride, pleasure and confidence which we used to take in the thoughts of our own righteousness and obedience to the law of God; but we must remember that the first thing which our Saviour enjoins those that come after him, is to deny themselves.

Thus I have shown what it is in ourselves that we must deny, and how it is that we must deny ourselves, if we desire to go after Christ. We must deny ourselves the curiosity of searching too much

¹ Phil. iii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

into the mysteries of the gospel, by the light of our own clouded reason; we must deny our self-conceit, our self-love, self-interest, self-confidence, and whatsoever proceeds from and terminates in our sensual and sinful selves, so as to have no delight in, nor dependence upon ourselves; yea, we must so deny ourselves, as to be quite taken off of our former selves, and become other creatures than what we were. Thus, St. Ambrose explains these words, saying, "Let a man deny himself to himself, so as to be wholly changed from what he was."¹ But then you will say, what need is there of all this trouble; what reason can be given that a man must deny himself before he can be a true Christian?

To this I answer, it is reason enough that Christ hath commanded us to do it; and surely he best knows whom he will accept of as his disciples, and what is necessary to be done in order to our being so: and he hath said in plain terms, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,' implying, that he that doth not deny himself cannot go after him.

But besides that, there is an impossibility in the thing itself, that any one should be a true Christian, or go after Christ, and not deny himself, as may be easily perceived, if they will but consider what true Christianity requires of us, and what it is to be a real Christian. A true Christian, we know, is one that lives by faith, and not by sight: 'that looks not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen;' that believes whatsoever Christ hath said, trusteth on whatso-

¹ Seipsum sibi homo abneget et totus mutetur.

ever he hath promised, and obeyeth whatsoever he hath commanded ; that receiveth Christ as his only priest to make atonement for him, as his only prophet to instruct, and as his only Lord and master to rule and govern him. In a word, a Christian is one that gives up himself and all he hath to Christ, who gave himself and all that he hath to him ; and therefore the very notion of true Christianity implies and supposes the denial of ourselves, without which it is as impossible for a man to be a Christian, as it is for a subject to be rebellious and loyal to his prince at the same time ; and therefore it is absolutely necessary that we go out of ourselves before we can go to him, we must strip ourselves of our very selves before we can put on Christ ; for Christ himself hath told us that ‘no man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.’¹ We ‘cannot serve God and mammon,’ Christ and ourselves too ; so that we must either deny ourselves to go after Christ, or else deny Christ to go after ourselves, so as to mind our own selfish ends and designs in the world.

Wherefore I hope I need not use any other arguments to persuade any to deny themselves in the sense already explained ; I dare say there is none amongst us but would willingly be what we profess, even a real Christian, and so go after Christ here as to come to him hereafter. But we have now seen how Christ himself told us, that ‘we must deny ourselves,’ if we desire to serve and enjoy him : and verily it is a hard case if we cannot deny ourselves for him who so far denied him-

¹ Matt. vi. 24.

self for us, as to lay down his own life to redeem ours. He who was equal to God himself, yea, who himself was the true God, so far denied himself as to become a man, yea, 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' for us: and cannot we deny ourselves so much as a fancy, a conceit, a sin, or lust for him? How then can we expect that he should own us for his friends, his servants, or disciples? No, he will never do it, neither can we in reason expect that he should give himself and all the merits of his death and passion unto us, so long as we think much to give ourselves to him, or to deny ourselves for him. And therefore if we desire to be made partakers of those glorious things which he hath purchased with his own precious blood for the sons of men; let us begin here, indulge our flesh no longer, but deny ourselves whatsoever God hath been pleased to forbid. And for that end, let us endeavour each day more and more to live above ourselves, above the temper of our bodies, and above the allurements of the world, live as those who believe and profess that they are none of their own, but Christ's; his by creation, it was he that made us; his by preservation, it is he that maintains us; and his by redemption, it is he that hath purchased and redeemed us with his own blood. And therefore, let us deny ourselves for the future to our very selves, whose we are not, and devote ourselves to him whose alone we are; by this we shall manifest ourselves to be Christ's disciples indeed, especially if we do not only deny ourselves, but also take up our cross and follow him; which brings me to the second thing which our blessed

Saviour here requires of those who would go after him, even 'to take up their cross.'

Where, by the cross, we are to understand whatsoever troubles or calamities, inward or outward, we meet with in the performance of our duty to God or man, which they that would go after Christ must take up as they go along, without any more ado, neither repining at them, nor sinking under them; for we must not think that Christ invites us to an earthly paradise of idleness or outward pleasure, as if we had nothing to do or to suffer for him: for even as men we cannot but find many crosses in the world, but as Christians we must expect more, for Christ himself hath told us, 'that in the world we shall have tribulation.'¹ And therefore whatsoever we meet with, is no more than what we are to look for; especially if we walk uprightly in the way that leads to heaven, we cannot but expect to meet with many a rub, for God himself hath told us that it is 'through many tribulations' that we must 'enter into the kingdom of heaven.'² And therefore we must not think to be carried up to heaven with the breath of popular applause, nor to swim through a deluge of carnal pleasures into the haven of everlasting happiness. No, we must look to be tossed to and fro in this world, as in a raging and tempestuous ocean, and never look for perpetual calmness and tranquillity, until we have got above the clouds, yea, even above the sun and stars themselves. This world was always a world of trouble, and ever will be; its very friends, and they that have their portion

¹ John, xvi. 33.

² Acts, xiv. 25.

here, can find no quiet nor satisfaction in it; but the disciples of Christ 'they are not of this world,' as Christ himself tells us.¹ And therefore no wonder if the world frowns more upon them than others; the way they walk in is opposite to the world, it is enmity itself to the flesh, and therefore no wonder if they meet with so much enmity and opposition here; the way wherein they go after Christ is a cross way, it is cross to sin, cross to Satan, cross to the world, cross to our very selves as we are by nature, and by consequence cross to all men in the world but Christ's disciples; and therefore it is no wonder they meet with so many crosses in it. But howsoever, if we desire to go after Christ, he hath told us beforehand what we must expect; as he hath borne the cross before us, he expects that we now bear it after him; yea, we must not only bear it, but take it up too: not that we should run ourselves into danger, but that we should baulk no duty to avoid it, so as to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest suffering, rather than to commit the least sin, and to run the greatest danger rather than neglect the smallest duty. If whilst we are walking in the narrow path of holiness, there happens to lie a cross in the way, we must not go on one side nor on the other side of it out of the path we walk in, neither must we kick and spurn it, but we must patiently take it up, and carry it along with us; if it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and not at all hinder, but rather further our progress towards heaven.

But here we must have a great care to under-

¹ John, xvii. 14.

stand our Saviour's meaning, and so our own duty aright; for we must not think that every trouble we meet with in the world is the cross of Christ, for we may suffer for our fancy or humour, or perhaps for our sin and transgression of the laws of God or men; and if so, it is our own cross, not Christ's which we take upon us; we may thank ourselves for it; I am sure Christ hath no cause to thank us: 'For this is thank-worthy,' saith the apostle, 'if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.'¹ And therefore the duty which our Saviour here imposeth on us in few terms is this, that we be ready not only to do, but to suffer what we can for the glory of God, and the futherance of the gospel, and that we omit no duty, nor commit any sin for fear of suffering; nor think so much of any trouble that befalls us for Christ's sake, but rather to rejoice at it, even as the apostles rejoiced, that 'they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'² Which was a clear instance of their performing the duty here enjoined both them and us, under the name of 'taking up our cross.'

And I hope there is none of us can take it ill, that Christ hath imposed so severe a duty upon us; for we may assure ourselves he requires no more of us than what himself hath undergone before, so that we can suffer nothing for him but what he hath suffered before for us. Have we grief and trouble in our hearts? So had he.³ Have we pains and tortures in our bodies? So had he.⁴ Are we derided and scoffed at? So was he.⁵ Are

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

² Acts, v. 41.

³ Matt. xxvi. 38.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 31.

we arraigned and condemned, yea, do we suffer death itself? It is no more than what our Lord and master hath done before. And let us remember what he told us when he was upon the earth, 'The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.'¹ If we be Christ's disciples, we cannot expect to fare better in the world than Christ himself did, neither indeed can we fare so bad; for it is impossible that we should undergo so much for him as he hath undergone for us, ours being only the sufferings of men, his the sufferings of one who was God as well as man; whereby sufferings in general are sanctified to our human nature, it having already undergone them in the person of the Son of God; so that it can be now no disparagement at all to undergo any trouble, as hatred, reproach, poverty, pain, yea, death itself, or any other calamity whatsoever in this world, seeing the Son of God himself, he that made the world, underwent the same while himself was in it. And therefore we need not think it below us to stoop down and take up the cross of Christ, as considering that Christ hath borne it before us, hath so blessed and sanctified it unto us, that it is now become an honourable, and advantageous, yea, and a pleasant cross, to them that bear it patiently, thankfully, and constantly, as they ought to do, especially seeing it is such a cross as leads unto a crown; whatsoever we can do or suffer for Christ here, will be fully recompensed with glory hereafter; and therefore instead of being troubled to take up our cross, we are rather to rejoice that we have any to take up.

¹ Matt. x. 24.

Thus we see in few words, what it is which our Saviour commands us, when he enjoins us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross; even that we do not gratify ourselves in any thing that is ungrateful unto him, nor grudge to take up any cross, or suffer any trouble we meet with in the world for his sake, thinking nothing too dear to forsake, nor any thing too heavy to bear for him, who thought not his own life too dear, nor the cross itself too heavy to bear for us. What now remains, but that knowing our Saviour's pleasure we should all resolve to do it? There is none of us but hope and desire to be saved by him; but that we can never be, unless we observe what he hath prescribed in order to our salvation: and amongst other things, we see how he hath commanded us to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross. As any of us therefore desire to be Christians indeed, so as to see Christ's face with comfort in another world, let us bethink ourselves seriously what sins we have hitherto indulged ourselves in. I fear there are but few, if any amongst us, but are conscious to themselves, that they have, and do still live, either in the constant neglect of some known duty, or else in the frequent commission of some beloved sin: what that is I dare not undertake to tell, but leave that to God and to men's own consciences; only I desire them to deal faithfully with their own souls, and not suffer themselves to be fooled into a fond and vain persuasion that they have any interest in Christ, or are truly his disciples, until they deny themselves that sin, whatsoever it is, which they have hitherto indulged themselves in. And let us not think that we shall deny ourselves any real pleasure or profit, by renouncing

our sins ; for what pleasure can we have in displeasing God ; or profit in losing our own souls ? No, we shall gratify ourselves, more than we can imagine, by denying ourselves, as much as we are able, whatsoever is offensive or displeasing unto God ; for we may be sure, he that came into the world on purpose to save us from evil, commands us nothing but for our own good ; neither would he ever have obliged us to deny ourselves, if we could have been saved without it ; and as for the cross, that he was so well acquainted with, that he would never have imposed it upon us to take it up, but that it is indispensably necessary for us. And therefore if we be what we pretend, real and true Christians, let us manifest it to the world, and to our own consciences, by denying ourselves whatsoever Christ hath denied us, and by observing whatsoever he hath commanded us, even to the taking up of any cross that he for his own sake shall suffer to be laid upon us ; still remembering, that self-denial, though it be unpleasant, is a most necessary duty ; and the cross, though it be never so heavy, is but short, and hath nothing less than a crown annexed unto it, a glorious and eternal crown, which all those shall most certainly obtain, who deny themselves.

THOUGHTS UPON STRIVING TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

As certainly as we are here now, it is not long but we shall all be in another world : either in a world of happiness, or else in a world of misery ; or, if you will, either in heaven or in hell. For these are the two only places which all mankind, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, must live in for evermore, some in the one, some in the other, according to their carriage and behaviour here ; and therefore it is worth the while to take a view and prospect now and then of both these places, and it will not be amiss if we do it now ; for which end, I desire the reader, in his serious and composed thoughts, to attend me first into the celestial mansions, above yonder glorious sun and the stars themselves, where not only the cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, but many also of our brethren, the sons of men, at this very moment are enjoying the presence, and singing forth the praises of the most high God. There are the spirits of just men made perfect, perfect in themselves, and perfect in all their actions, perfectly free from all both sin and misery, perfectly free of all true grace and glory, all their faculties being reduced to that most perfect and excellent frame of constitution, that their understandings are continually taken up with the contemplations of the supreme truth, and their wills in the embracement of their chiefest good ; so that all the inclinations of their souls rest in God as in their proper

centre, in whom by consequence they enjoy as much as they can desire, yea as much as they can be made capable of desiring; for all those infinite perfections that are concentered in God himself, are now in their possession, to solace and delight themselves in the full and perfect enjoyment of them; by which means they are as happy as God himself can make them; insomuch that at this very moment methinks we may all behold them so ravished, so transported with their celestial joys, that it may justly strike us into admiration, how ever creatures which were once sinful, could be made so pure, so perfect, and altogether so happy as they are. And could we but leave our bodies for a while below, and go up to take a turn in the New Jerusalem that is above, we could not but be ravished and transported at the very sight both of the place and inhabitants, every one being far more glorious than the greatest emperors of this world, with nothing less than crowns of glory on their heads, and sceptres of righteousness in their hands; where they think of nothing but the glory of God, discourse of nothing but praising him, do nothing but adore and worship him: in a word, whatsoever is agreeable to our natures, whatsoever is desirable to our souls, whatsoever can any way conduce to make men happy, is fully, perfectly, eternally enjoyed, by all and every person that is in heaven. Whereas on the other side, if we bring down our thoughts from heaven, and send them as low as hell, to consider the most deplorable estate and condition of those who inhabit the regions of darkness, them we shall find as miserable as the others are happy; not only in that they are deprived of the vision and fruition of the chiefest

good, but likewise in that they are in continual pain and torment, as great as infinite justice can adjudge them to, and infinite power inflict upon them, insomuch that could we lay our ear to the entrance of that bottomless pit, what howlings and shriekings should we hear, what weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in the midst of those infernal flames, where, as our Saviour himself tells us, 'The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'¹ That is, where the consciences are always gnawed and tormented with the remembrance of their former sins, and the fire of God's wrath is continually burning in them, never to be quenched or abated: for certainly as the smiles and favour of the eternal God constitute the joys of heaven, so do his frowns and anger make up the flames of hell. To see him that made us displeased with us, to see mercy itself to frown upon us, to see the great and all-glorious Creator of the world, the chiefest good, to look angrily upon us, and to show himself offended at us, and incensed against us! Methinks the very thoughts of it are sufficient to make the stoutest heart amongst us tremble. But then what shall we think of those poor souls that see and feel it? What shall we think of them? Questionless they are more miserable than we are able to think them to be. For we cannot possibly conceive either the greatness of heaven's glory, or the sharpness of hell's torments; only this we know, and may be certain of, that whatsoever is ungrateful to their minds, whatsoever is troublesome to their thoughts, whatsoever is contrary to their desires, whatsoever is painful to their

¹ Mark, ix. 44.

bodies, or whatsoever is or can be destructive and tormenting to their souls, that, all they who are once in hell shall fear and feel, and that for ever.

But this is too sad and doleful a subject to insist on long, neither should I have mentioned it, but for our own good, and to prepare us the better, both for the understanding and improving the advice of our Saviour, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate,' &c. The meaning of which words, in brief, may be reduced to these three heads :

First, That it is an easy matter to go to hell, that place of torments we have now been describing, and by consequence that many go thither ; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leadeth thither.

Secondly, That it is a hard and difficult thing to get to heaven, that place of joys we before spake of, and by consequence that but few get thither ; 'For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to it.'

Lastly, Howsoever difficult it is, our Saviour would have us strive to get to heaven, so as to pass through that strait gate, and walk in that narrow way that leadeth unto life.

As for the first, that the gate is wide, and the way broad that leads to hell, or that it is an easy matter to go thither, I need not use many words to prove it. For though there be but few that mind it, I dare say there is scarce any one but believes it, yea, and hath oftentimes found it to be true by experience, even that it is an easy matter to sin, and that, we know, is the broad way that leads to hell ; so broad, that they who walk in it can find no

¹ Matt. vii. 13, 14.

bounds or limits in it, wherewithin to contain themselves ; neither are they ever out of their way, but go which way they will, they are still in the ready way to ruin and destruction. And usually it is as plain as broad, so that men rarely meet with any roughness or trouble in it, but rather with all the pleasures and delights which they desire, who look no higher than to please the flesh ; yea, whatsoever it is that they naturally desire they still meet with it in the road to hell ; and whatsoever is ungrateful and irksome to them, they are never troubled with it in the ways of sin. There are no crosses to be taken up, no self to be denied, but rather indulged and gratified ; there are no such tedious and troublesome things as examining our hearts, and mortifying our lusts, as praying or hearing, as fasting or watching ; these are only to be found in the narrow path that leads to heaven ; the broad way to hell is altogether unacquainted with them, being strewed all along with carnal pleasures and sensual delights, with popular applause, and earthly riches, and such fine things as silly mortals use to be taken with.

And hence it is, that our Saviour tells us, many there be which find this way, and go in at this wide gate that leads to ruin, because they see not whither it leads, but they see the baits and allurements which are in it, which they cannot but crowd about as fishes about the hook, or as flies about a candle, till they be destroyed. Yea, this way to destruction is so broad, that almost all the world is continually walking in it ; the gate so wide, that thousands at a time pass through it. And therefore we may well conclude it is a very easy thing to go to that place of torments, which even now we speak

of, or rather that it is an hard, a difficult matter to keep out of it, the way being so narrow that carries from it, that it is a difficult thing to find it; and the way so broad that leads unto it, that none can miss of it that hath but a mind to walk in it.

But I hope none of my readers have, God forbid they should have, a mind to go to hell: their taking religious books into their hands is rather an argument that they have a mind to go to heaven, and read on purpose to learn the way thither. And we do well to take all opportunities of finding out the way to bliss; for we may assure ourselves it is a very narrow one, it is hard to find it out, but much more hard to walk in it; for it is a way very rarely trodden, so that there is scarce any path to be seen, most people go either on one side, or else on the other side of it; some running into the by-paths of error, heresy or schism, others into the broad way of profaneness or security: insomuch that there are but very few that hit upon the right path that leads directly to the New Jerusalem, the place of rest. I speak not this of myself; no, Christ himself that came from heaven to earth, on purpose to show us the way from earth to heaven, saith, that 'strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

And let not any think that Christ spake these words in vain, or that it is no great matter whether we believe what he said or no. For questionless, one great reason why so few ever come to heaven, is because most think it so easy to get thither, that they need not take any care or pains about it. For even amongst ourselves, to whom the gospel is so clearly revealed, men generally think, if they do

but read the Scriptures, and hear sermons, and live honestly with their neighbours, so as to harm nobody, but pay every one their own, then they shall as surely come to heaven as if they were there already; nay, many are so simple as to think that their separation from the church militant on earth is the way to bring them to the church triumphant in heaven; and others so ridiculous as to believe that a death-bed repentance is sufficient to entitle them to eternal life. But stay a while: it is not so easy a matter to get to heaven. Indeed to me it seems one of the greatest mysteries in the world, that ever any man or woman should come thither; that such sinful worms as we are, who are born in sin, and live so long in sin and rebellion against the great Creator of the world, should ever be received so far into his grace and favour as to enjoy life and eternal happiness in him. And did we look no further than ourselves, we might justly despair of ever obtaining such transcendant glory which we are altogether so unworthy of. But the goodness of God both is and hath been so great to mankind, that there is none of us but, in and through the merits of Christ Jesus, is in a capacity of it. Yet we must not think that it is so easy a thing to come to heaven, as the devil, the world, and our own base hearts, would persuade us it is: if we do, we are never likely to come thither; no, we may assure ourselves, as heaven is the greatest good that we can attain, so doth it require our greatest care and study imaginable to attain it.

This therefore is that which I shall endeavour to convince men of, and account myself happy if I can do it. For I dare say, there is none of us but desires to see Christ in glory, and to be happy

with him and in him for ever; but that we can never be, unless we do whatsoever is required of us, in order to it; and if we think it is so easy a matter to do whatsoever is required of us, I have just cause to suspect that we never yet made trial of it, nor set ourselves seriously upon the performance of those duties which are enjoined us here in reference to our being happy for ever. For if we have set upon it in good earnest, we cannot but have found it very hard and difficult, by reason of our natural averseness from what is good, and inclinations unto evil. For we all know, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'¹ So that holiness is the way, the direct and only way, that leads to heaven; neither is there any way imaginable of being happy hereafter, but by being holy here. And though it be an easy thing to profess holiness, and to perform some external acts of it; yet to be truly pious and holy indeed, so as we must be if ever we would go to heaven, this is every whit as difficult as the other is easy.

For first, I suppose all will grant that he is not truly holy that lives in any known sin, as the apostle also intimates, saying, 'He that is born of God doth not commit sin.'² And therefore he that still indulgeth himself in the commission of any known sin, he is not yet regenerate, or born of God, he is not truly holy. So that to our being so holy here, as that we may be happy hereafter, it is absolutely and indispensably necessary that we forsake and avoid to the utmost of our power whatsoever is offensive unto God, and contrary to his laws. But it is as difficult as it is necessary to forsake sin as

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

² 1 John, iii. 9.

we ought to do. It is an easy matter, I confess, to rail at sin, to backbite others, to blame ourselves for it. But that is not the business; but to loath our sins as much as ever we loved them, to abhor them as much as ever we desired them, and to be as much averse from them as ever we were inclined to them; to forsake sin as sin, and by consequence all sins whatsoever, one as well as another; so as to deny ourselves all that pleasure we were wont to take in any sin, and all that seeming profit which we used to receive by it, and that too out of love to God, and fear of his displeasure: this is to forsake sin indeed, but it is sooner spoken of than done; and it requires a great deal of time, and skill, and pains, to get so great a conquest over ourselves as this is, to cut off our right hand, to pluck out our right eye, and cast it from us; even to renounce and forsake those very beloved and darling sins, which the temper and constitution of our bodies, the corruption of our hearts, and constant custom and practice hath made in a manner natural to us. So that our very natures must be changed before we can ever leave them. And therefore it must needs be a matter of as great difficulty as it is of moment to master and subdue those sins and lusts that have been long predominant in us; which I dare say many of us have found by our own sad and woeful experience, having struggled perhaps many years against some corruption, and yet to this day have not got it under, nor totally subdued it. And it is such, and such alone, who are competent judges in this case; for they that never strove against their sins, cannot know how strong they are, nor how hard it is to conquer them. And therefore it is to those who have made it their bu-

siness to destroy and mortify their lusts, that I appeal whether it be not hard to do it. I am confident they cannot but have found it, and therefore must needs acknowledge it to be so; and by consequence that it is no easy matter to get to heaven, seeing it is so hard to keep out of hell, and to avoid those sins which otherwise will certainly bring us thither; every sin unrepented of having eternal punishment entailed upon it.

And if it be so hard to forsake sin, how difficult must it needs be to perform all those duties, and to exert all those graces which are necessarily required, in order to our attaining everlasting happiness. It is true, praying and hearing, which are the ordinary means for the obtaining true grace and holiness, are duties very common and customary amongst us, but they are never the easier because they are common, but rather far more difficult. For we being accustomed to a careless and perfunctory performing of these duties, cannot but find it a hard and difficult matter to keep our hearts so close unto them, as to perform them as we ought to do, and so as that we may be really said to do them. For we must not think that sitting at church while the word of God is preached, is hearing the word of God, or being present there while prayers are read, is real praying: no, no, there is a deal more required than this to our praying to the great God aright; insomuch that, for my own part, I really think that prayer, as it is the highest, so it is the hardest duty that we can be engaged in. All the faculties of our souls, as well as members of our bodies, being obliged to put forth themselves in their several capacities, to the due performance of it.

And as for these several graces and virtues which

our souls must be adorned withal, before ever they can come to heaven, though it be easy to talk of them, it is not so to act them. I shall instance only in some few; as to love God above all things, and other things only for God's sake; to hope on nothing but God's promises, and to fear nothing but his displeasure; to love other men's persons so as to hate their vices, and so to hate their vices as still to love their persons; not to covet riches when we have them not, nor trust on them when we have them; to deny ourselves that we may please God, and to take up our cross that we may follow Christ; to live above the world whilst we are in it, and to despise it whilst we use it; to be always upon our watch and guard, strictly observing not only the outward actions of our life, but the inward motions of our hearts; to hate those very sins which we used to love, and to love those very duties which we used to hate; to choose the greatest affliction before the least sin, and to neglect the getting of the greatest gain, rather than the performing of the smallest duty; to believe truths which we cannot comprehend, merely upon the testimony of one whom we never saw; to submit our own wills to God's, and to delight ourselves in obeying him; to be patient under sufferings, and thankful for all the troubles we meet with here below; to be ready and willing to do and suffer any thing we can for him who hath done and suffered so much for us; to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, relieve the indigent, and rescue the oppressed to the utmost of our power: in a word, to be every way as pious towards God, as obedient to Christ, as loyal to our prince, as faithful to our friends, as loving to our enemies, as charitable to the poor, as

just in our dealings, as eminent in all true graces and virtues, as if we were to be saved by it, and yet by no confidence in it, but still look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants, and depend upon Christ, and Christ alone, for pardon and salvation.

I suppose I need not tell any one that it is hard and difficult to perform such duties, and to act such graces as these are ; but this, let me tell the reader, that how hard, how difficult soever it is, it must be done, if ever we design to come to heaven, and by consequence it is no easy matter to come thither. Seeing therefore the way that leads to heaven is thus narrow, and hard, it is no wonder that there are few that walk in it, or indeed that find it out, as our Saviour himself assures us ; for people generally love to swim with the stream, to run with the multitude, though it be into the gulf of sin and misery. It is very rare to find one walking in the narrow way, and keeping himself within those bounds and limits wherewith it is inclosed ; and this seems to have been the occasion of these words in the Gospel of St. Luke, where one said unto Christ, ‘ Lord, are there few that be saved ? ’ And our Saviour answered in these words, ‘ Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ’¹ Intimating, not only that there are few that shall be saved, but likewise that many of those who seek to be saved shall not attain it ; not as if any of those who really and cordially make it their business to look after heaven, can ever miss of it ; but, that many of those who presuming upon their seem-

¹ Luke, xiii. 23, 24.

ing obedience and good works shall think and seek that way to enter into the kingdom of God, 'shall not be able. For many will say unto me at that day,' saith he, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'¹ And if many of those who are great professors of religion, and make a plausible show of piety in the world, shall notwithstanding come short of eternal happiness, and if out of those 'many which are called there are but few chosen,'² we may well conclude there are but few indeed that walk in the narrow path that leads to life, in comparison of those innumerable multitudes that continually flock together in the broad way that leads to ruin and destruction. One great reason whereof is, because men generally, though they desire to go to heaven, yet will not believe it to be so hard a thing as it really is, to get thither; and therefore, setting aside the superficial performance of some few external duties, they give themselves no trouble, nor take any pains about it; as if heaven was so contemptible a thing, that it is not worth their while to look after it; or howsoever, as if it was so easy a thing to attain it, that they cannot miss it whether they look after it or no. Whereas questionless, as heaven is the greatest happiness that we are capable of, so it is the hardest matter in the world for any of us to attain it.

I say not this to discourage any one, but rather to excite and encourage all to a greater care and

¹ Matt. vii. 22, 23.

² Ibid. xx. 16.

diligence in the prosecution of eternal happiness, than ordinarily men seem to have. It is my hearty desire and prayer that every soul among us may live and be happy for ever; but that we can never be, unless we be serious, earnest and constant in looking after it, more than after all things in the world besides. And therefore it is that I have endeavoured to convince men that it is not so easy a thing as they make it, to go to heaven, the path being so exceeding narrow that leads unto it; which I hope by this time we are all persuaded of, so as to be resolved within ourselves to play no longer with religion, but to set upon it in good earnest, so as to make it not only our great, but our only business and design in this world to prepare for another, and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and by consequence to walk in that narrow way of true piety and virtue that leads to heaven, without going aside into the vices on either hand; or howsoever to use the utmost of our endeavour to observe the rules which Christ hath prescribed us, in order to our living with him for ever. And, oh! that I knew what words to take unto myself, and what arguments to use, whereby to prevail with every soul of us to make it our business to get to heaven; and by consequence to walk directly in the narrow way, and through the strait gate that leads unto it. What influence or effect they may have upon the readers, I know not; howsoever I shall endeavour to present them with such considerations, as I hope, by the blessing of God, and the assistance of his grace may be so forcible and prevalent upon them, if seriously weighed, that they should not, methinks, be able to resist them.

Let us consider therefore, in the first place, that though it be never so hard to get to heaven, yet it is possible ; and though there be but few that come thither, yet there are some ; and why may not you and I be in the number of those few as well as others ? There are many perfect and glorious saints in heaven at this moment, which once were sinful creatures upon earth as we now are ; but it seems the way thither was not so narrow but they could walk in it, nor the gate so strait but they could pass through it ; and why may not we as well as they ? We have the same natures whereby we are capable of happiness as they had ; we have the same Scriptures to direct us to it as they had ; we have the same promises of assistance as they had ; we have the same Saviour as they had, and why then may we not get to the same place where they are ? Is the way more narrow, and the gate more strait to us than it was to them ? No, surely, it is every way the same. Why then should we despair of ever attaining everlasting glory, seeing we are as capable of it as any one who hath yet attained it ? It is true, if no mortal men had ever got to heaven, or God had said none ever can get thither, then indeed it would be in vain in us to expect it, or to use any means to attain it : but seeing many of our brethren are already there, and many more will follow after them, and we are as capable of coming to them as any other, the straitness of the gate, the narrowness of the way, or the difficulty of getting thither, should never discourage us from endeavouring after it, no more than it did them, but rather make us more diligent in the prosecution of it : especially considering, in the next place, that we are not only as yet in a capa-

city of getting to heaven, but we are all invited thither, and that by God himself, for he would have all men to be saved, and 'to come unto the knowledge of the truth.'¹ Yea, he hath sworn by himself, saying, 'As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live;' and therefore calls upon us all, 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'² Hence it is that he sent his prophets to invite us, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'³ Yea, he came down in his own person to earth, on purpose to invite us to heaven, and to direct us the way thither: 'Come to me,' saith he, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'⁴ 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'⁵ Whence we may observe, that there is no exception made against any person whatsoever, nor by consequence against any of us. It is the will, yea, and command of God too, that we all turn from our evil way and live, and that every soul amongst us walk in that narrow way that leads to eternal bliss; and therefore if any of us do perish, 'Our blood will be upon our own heads, our destruction is from ourselves.'⁶ For it is nothing but the perverseness of our own hearts, that can keep any soul of us out of heaven, however difficult it is to come thither. For God hath shown how desirous he is to have our company

¹ Tim. ii. 4.² Ezek. xxxiii. 11.³ Isaiah, lv. 1.⁴ Matt. xi. 29.⁵ John, iii. 16.⁶ Hos. xiii. 9.

there, in that he is still pleased to grant us both the space and means of repentance. If he had no mind to have us saved, he could have shut us up long ago in hell; but he is so far from that, that he doth not only as yet continue our abode on earth, and lengthen our tranquillity here, but he still vouchsafes unto us whatsoever is necessary, yea, whatsoever can any ways conduce to our eternal happiness; we have his Scriptures, we have his sabbaths, we have his ordinances, we have his sacraments, we have his ministers, we have the promise of his Spirit, we have the overtures of Christ, and of all the merits of his death and passion made unto us; and what can be desired more to make men happy? and yet, as if all this had not been enough, he still continues calling upon us, exhorting, commanding, yea, and beseeching us most affectionately to turn, that our souls may live; for we his ministers are ambassadors to mankind for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: 'We pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.'¹ And he hath sent me unto you that read this, in a particular manner at this time, to call you back out of the broad way that leads to death, into the narrow way that leads to life and happiness; 'in his name, therefore, I exhort, yea, and beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'² Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' and never leave till you have got possession of eternal glory.

Nor let us be discouraged at any difficulties that we meet with in the way, for they will soon be

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20.

² Rom. xii. 1.

over; howsoever hard and difficult any duty may seem at first, by use and custom it will soon grow easy. The worst is at our first setting out; when once we have been used awhile to walk in this narrow way, we shall find it to be both easy and pleasant: for as the wise man tells us, the ways of wisdom or true piety 'are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'¹ Though it be rough at first, by treading it will soon grow plain; we shall soon find the words of Christ to be true, that his 'yoke is easy, and his burden light.'² All is but to be willing and obedient, and resolved upon it, to press through all difficulties whatsoever to get to heaven, and then by the merits of Christ's passion, and the assistance of his grace, we need not fear but we shall come thither.

And verily, although the way to heaven should prove not only narrow, but hedged in with briars and thorns, so that we should meet with nothing but crosses and troubles in our going to it, yet heaven will make amends for all. For we may well reckon with the apostle, 'that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.'³ So that whatsoever pains we are at, whatsoever trouble we suffer in order to our attaining everlasting happiness, bears no proportion at all to the happiness we attain by it; which is so great, so exceeding great, that our tongues can neither express, nor our minds as yet conceive it; consisting not only in the freedom from all evil, but also in the enjoyment of what is really and truly good; even whatsoever can any way conduce to the making us perfectly

¹ Prov. iii. 17.² Matt. xi. 39.³ Rom. viii. 18.

and completely happy : so that no duty can be too great to undertake, no trouble too heavy to undergo for it. Wherefore, that I may use the words of the apostle to my readers, ‘ My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.’¹

By this time I hope we are all resolved within ourselves to follow our Saviour’s counsel and advice, even ‘ to strive to enter in at the strait gate,’ and ‘ walk in that narrow way that leads to life.’ If we be not, we have just cause to suspect ourselves to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity ; but if we be but resolved in good earnest, we cannot but be very solicitous to know what we must do in order to it, or how every one of us may ‘ enter in at the strait gate,’ so as to be happy for ever ? A question of the highest importance imaginable ; so that it is absolutely necessary for every soul amongst us to be thoroughly resolved in it, for it concerns our life, our immortal and eternal life ; and therefore I shall endeavour to resolve it in as few and perspicuous terms as possibly I can, that the meanest capacity may understand it. But I must take leave to say beforehand, that our knowing of it will signify nothing, unless we practise it, neither will you be ever the nearer heaven, because you know the way to it, unless you also walk in it.

And therefore the first thing I shall propound, in order to our eternal salvation, is, that we would resolve immediately in the presence of almighty God, that we will for the future make it our great care, study and business in this world, to ‘ seek the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof,' in the first place, according to our Saviour's advice and command ;¹ that we would not halt any longer between two opinions, and think to seek heaven and earth together, things diametrically opposite to one another. If we really think earth to be better than heaven, what need we trouble ourselves any further, than to heap up the riches, and to enjoy the pleasures of this world ? but if we really think heaven to be better than earth, as all wise men must needs do, then let us mind that, and concern not ourselves about this. We know what our Saviour told us long ago, ' No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold with the one, and despise the other : ye cannot serve God and mammon ;'² that is, in plain English, we cannot mind heaven and earth both together ; for we can have but one grand and principal design in the world ; and therefore if our principal design be to get wealth or any earthly enjoyment, we deceive ourselves, if we think that we mind heaven at all. For that we can never properly be said to do, until we mind it before all things whatsoever in the world besides ; and let us not say, or think within ourselves, ' that it is an hard saying,' for we may assure ourselves it is no more than what we shall find to be really true ; and that never a soul of us shall ever know what heaven is, that doth not first prefer it before all things here below, and by consequence make it his principal, if not only design to get thither.

Supposing us therefore to be thus resolved within ourselves, my next advice is, that we break off our

¹ Matt. vi. 33.

² Matt. vii. 14.

former sins by repentance, and showing mercy to the poor, and that for the future we live not in the wilful commission of any known sin, nor yet in the wilful neglect of any known duty. Where it is evident, I advise to no more than what all men know themselves to be obliged to do; for I dare say, there is none of us know so little, but what if he would but live up to what he knows, he could not be but both holy and happy. Let us but avoid what we ourselves know to be sin, and do what we know to be our duty, and though our knowledge may not be so great as others, yet our piety may be greater and our condition better. But we must still remember, that one sin will keep us out of heaven as well as twenty; and therefore, if we ever desire to come thither, we must not only do some or many things, but all things, whatsoever is required of us, to the best of our knowledge. I speak not this of myself, but Christ himself hath told us the same before, even that we must keep the commandments, all the commandments, if we desire to enter into eternal life.¹ Not as if it was indispensably necessary to observe every punctilio and circumstance of the moral law, for then no man could be saved; but that it must be both our steadfast resolution, and our chief study and endeavour to avoid whatsoever we know to be forbidden, and to perform whatsoever we know to be commanded by God.

And though by this we shall make a fair progress in the narrow way to life, yet there is still another step behind, before we can enter in at the strait gate, and that is to believe in Jesus Christ, as our Saviour himself has taught us.² The sum of

¹ Matt. xix. 16, 17.

² Matt. xix. 21.

which duty in brief is this, that when we have done all we can in obedience to the moral law, yet we must still look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants, and not expect to be justified or saved by virtue of that obedience, but only by the merits of Christ's death and passion; humbly confiding that, in and through him, the defects of our obedience shall be remitted, our persons accepted, our natures cleansed, and our souls eternally saved. This is not only the principal, but the only thing which Paul and Silas directed the keeper of the prison to, in order to his salvation, as comprehending all the rest under it, or at least supposing them.¹

Thus therefore, though obedience be the way, faith is the gate through which we must enter into life. But seeing the gate is strait as well as the way narrow, and it is as hard to believe in Christ as to observe the law, we must not think to do either by our own strength, but still implore the aid and assistance of Almighty God, and depend upon him for it. For Christ himself saith, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me, draw him.'² But we can never expect that he should draw us, unless we desire it of him; and therefore it must be our daily prayer and petition at the throne of grace, that God would vouchsafe us his especial grace and assistance, without which I cannot see how any one that knows his own heart, can expect to be saved. But our comfort is, if we do what we can, God will hear our prayers, and enable us to do what otherwise we cannot; for he never yet did, nor ever will fail any man that sincerely endeavours to serve and honour him.

¹ Acts, xvi. 31.

² John, vi. 44.

Lastly, Although we are to trust in God for the answer of our prayers in this particular, yet we must not expect that he should do it immediately from himself, but we must use those means which himself hath appointed whereby to work faith, and by consequence all other graces in us. Now the Scripture tells us that faith comes by hearing.¹ Wherefore, if we desire to believe, so as to be saved, we must wait upon God in his public ordinances, and there expect such influences of his grace and Spirit whereby we may be enabled to walk in the narrow way, and enter in at the strait gate that leads to life.

Thus I have shown you in a few terms, how to do the great work which you came into the world about, even how to get to heaven. For howsoever hard it is to come hither, let us but resolve, as we have seen, to mind it before all things else, fear God and keep his commandments to the utmost of our power, believe in Christ for the pardon of our sins, and acceptance both of our persons and performances ; pray sincerely to God, and wait diligently upon him for the assistance of his grace, to do what he requires from us. Let us do this, and we need not fear but our souls shall live. If we leave this undone, we ourselves shall be undone for ever. And therefore let me advise all to dally no longer in a matter of such consequence as this, but now we know the way to heaven, to turn immediately into it, and walk constantly in it. Though the way be narrow, it is not long, and though the gate be strait, it opens into eternal life. And therefore to conclude, let us remember we have now been told

¹ Rom. x. 17.

how to get to heaven ; it is not in my power to force men thither, whether they will or no ; I can only show them the way. It is their interest as well as duty to walk in it ; which if they do, I dare assure them in the name of Christ, it is not long but they will be admitted into the choir of heaven, to sing hallelujahs for evermore.

THOUGHTS UPON THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

If we seriously consider with ourselves, that wonder of all wonders, that mystery of all mysteries, the incarnation of the Son of God, it may justly strike us into astonishment, and an admiration what should be the reason and the end of it ; why the great and glorious, the almighty and eternal God, should take our weak and finite nature into his infinite and incomprehensible person ? Why the Creator of all things should himself become a creature ? And he that made the world be himself made into it ? Why the supreme Being of all beings, that gives essence and existence to all things in the world, whose glory the heaven of heavens is not able to contain, should clothe himself with flesh and become man, of the self-same nature and substance with us, who live, and move, and have our being in him ? certainly it was not upon any frivolous or ordinary account that the most high God manifested himself to the sons of men in so

wonderful and extraordinary a manner as this was. But he did it questionless upon some design that was as great and glorious as the act itself. And if we would know what his end and design in coming into the world was, the Scriptures assure us in general, that it was for the salvation of mankind whose nature he assumed. 'For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'¹ And he himself tells us, 'that God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.'² Now for the accomplishment of this no less glorious than gracious design, there are two things which it was necessary he should do for us, whilst he was upon earth, even expiate our former sins, and direct us unto holiness for the future; both which he hath effected for us: the one by his death, and the other by his life.

For by his death he hath paid that debt which we owed to God, having made complete satisfaction to God's justice for those sins whereby we have incurred his displeasure: for death was threatened to all mankind in case of disobedience, and by consequence all mankind being disobedient, are obnoxious to it. Neither would it stand with the justice of God to falsify his word, nor yet with his glory, to put up the injuries that we have committed against him, without having satisfaction made unto him for them. But it being impossible that a finite creature should satisfy for those sins which were committed against the infinite God; hence the infinite God himself was pleased to undertake it for us,

¹ 1 Tim. i. 25.

² John, iii. 16.

even to satisfy himself for those sins which were committed against him; which he did, by undergoing that death which he had threatened to us in our own nature, united to the person of his own and only Son, God co-equal, co-essential, co-eternal with himself, who is therefore said 'to be a propitiation for sins.'¹ Neither can there any reason imaginable be alleged, why the Son of God himself should suffer death, unless it was upon our account, and in our stead, whose nature he assumed, and in which he suffered it. But not to insist upon that now: the human nature in general having thus suffered that death in the person of the Son of God, which all mankind was otherwise bound to have undergone in their own persons; hence it comes to pass, that we are all in a capacity of avoiding that death which we have deserved by our sins, if we do but rightly believe in Christ, and apply his suffering to ourselves.

And as Christ by his death and passion hath thus satisfied for our sins, so hath he by his life and actions given us an exact pattern of true piety and virtue. And although I cannot say, it was the only, yet questionless one great end wherefore he continued so long on earth, and conversed so much amongst men, and that so many of his actions are delivered to us with so many circumstances as they are, was, that we, by his example, might learn how to carry and behave ourselves in this lower world. For as from that time to this, so from the beginning of the world to that time, there had never been a man upon the face of the earth, that had lived so conformably to the law of God,

¹ 1 John, ii. 2.

that it was safe or lawful for us to follow, we have now an addition in all things. For all flesh is corrupt, we have now an addition to be holy, 'as he who was very best of men were still in all manner of conversational failures in their lives, as Scripture tells us expressly, that judgments; yea those very Scriptures record, and God himself has been eminent in their generations. And our Saviour himself commended, did oftentimes fail in his own life, to learn of him.' And by God himself to have been expected that he should own Abraham to be the meekest man, we own him for our Lord Moses to be the meekest man, to obey and follow him; he be a man after God's own image, all those that come to him, to be the wisest man that ever lived, to follow up their crosses and follow a 'perfect and upright man, who has eschewed evil:' yet none of us, I hope, desire to be so perfect as I have explained the two last persons but had their virtues of the latter too, that we and it is observable that those that were in piety, the more they were sometimes suffered them to be humble. So that from the time of Adam, there never lived a man who can be said, this man never sinned, the laws of God, and therefore imitated by men.

But now as the first was made continued all along most pure thought, word, and action: neither was guile found in him, much as a vain thought ever in his holy heart, not so much as proceeded out of his divine lips, impertinent or frivolous action by his sacred and most righte-

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 2

not outwardly, but are
 inwardly, and of all unclean-
 ness. So though we might
 think their hearts; neither
 could, Christ himself
 do the contrary, saying,
 "I am the light of the
 world,"¹² Our Saviour
 wrought, and wrought
 demonstrations of his
 power in this he is to
 be followed or imitated
 by his disciples to
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 of the world, or as
 universal Proprietor of
 the Israelites
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 at the same
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¹² 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

us to be so; but howsoever, we have now an additional obligation upon us to be holy, 'as he who hath called us was holy in all manner of conversation'¹ For the Scripture tells us expressly, that Christ 'hath left us an example that we should follow his steps'² And our Saviour himself commands all that come to him, to learn of him.³ And therefore we can never expect that he should own us for his disciples, unless we own him for our Lord and Master, so far as to obey and follow him; he having commanded all those that come to him, to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow him. And seeing we all, I hope, desire to be Christians indeed, as I have explained the two former of these duties, I shall now endeavour to give the true meaning of the latter too, that we may all so follow Christ here, as to come to him hereafter.

Now for the opening of this, we must know that we neither can nor ought to follow Christ in every thing he did when he was here below; for even whilst he was here below, he was still the most high and mighty God, the same that he had been from eternity, and often manifested his power and glory to the sons of men, whilst he was conversing with them in their own nature, wherein it would be horrid presumption for us to pretend to follow him. As for example, 'He knew the very thoughts of men,'⁴ which I suppose is something past our skill to do. Hence also he judged and censured others, 'Woe unto you,' saith he, 'Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like to painted sepulchres,

¹ 1 Pet. i. 15.

² Matt. xi. 29, 30.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

⁴ Matt. xii. 25.

which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'¹ But this we could not do though we might, not being able to search into others' hearts; neither may we do it, though we could, Christ himself having expressly commanded the contrary, saying, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'² Our Saviour also, as God, foretold future events,³ and wrought miracles, such as were clear demonstrations of his infinite power and Godhead; but in this he is to be believed and admired, not followed or imitated by us. Thus also when he sent his disciples to loose another man's colt, and bring him away,⁴ that he did as Lord and Sovereign of the world, or as the supreme Possessor and universal Proprietor of all things; as when he commanded the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians, and carry away their jewels and raiment; for, all things being his, he may give them to whom he pleaseth; and though it would have been a sin to have taken them away without his command, yet his command gave them a property in them, a right and title to them, and they had sinned unless they had obeyed the command. So here our Saviour sent for the colt, as if it had been his own, for so really it was, as he is God, which he manifested himself to be at the same time, in that he inclined the heart of the civil owner thereof to let him go, only upon the disciple's saying, 'that the Lord had need of him.'⁵ But this he did not for our example, but to show forth his own power and glory.

There are some things also which our blessed

¹ Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

² Matt. vii. 1.

³ Luke, xxi. 6. ⁴ Luke, xix. 30. ⁵ Luke, xix. 33, 34.

Saviour did, as God-man, or as the Mediator betwixt God and man, as his making atonement and satisfaction for the sins of mankind, his instituting offices and ordinances, and sacraments in his church, and the like; which have an immediate respect to his office of Mediator, and being done upon that account we neither may nor can imitate him in such things. But the things which he would have us to follow him in, are such and such only as he did as mere man, that had no immediate dependence upon or reference to either his Godhead or Mediatorship. For he having honoured our nature so far as to take it into his own divine person, so as to become really and truly man; as so, he did whatsoever man is bound to do, both as to God himself, and likewise unto man; and being absolutely perfect in all the faculties of the soul, and members of his body, he infinitely surpassed all other men both in divine graces and moral virtues; so that as he never committed any one sin, so neither did he neglect any one duty, which as man he was bound to perform either to God, or men, but still observed every punctilio and circumstance of the moral law; by which means he left us a complete pattern of truth and universal holiness, and hath enjoined us all to follow it.

Hoping therefore, that all who profess themselves to be the friends and disciples of Jesus Christ, desire to manifest themselves to be so, by following both his precepts and example, I shall give the reader a short narrative of his life and actions, wherein we may all see what true piety is, and what real Christianity requires of us: and may not content ourselves as many do, with being professors, and adhering to parties or factions amongst us, but strive

to be thorough Christians, and to carry ourselves as such, by walking as Christ himself walked ; which that we may at least know how to do, looking upon Christ as a mere man, I shall show how he did, and by consequence how we ought to carry ourselves both to God and man, and what graces and virtues he exercised all along for our example and imitation.

Now for our more clear and methodical proceeding, in a matter of such consequence as this is, I shall begin with his behaviour towards men, from his childhood to his death.

First, Therefore, when he was a child of twelve years of age, it is particularly recorded of him, that he was subject or obedient to his parents, his real mother and reputed father.¹ It is true, he knew at that time that God himself was his Father, for, said he, ‘ Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ? ’² And knowing God to be his Father, he could not but know likewise that he was infinitely above his mother ; yea, that she could never have borne him, had not himself first made and supported her. Yet howsoever, though as God he was Father to her, yet as man she was mother to him, and therefore he honoured and obeyed both her, and him to whom she was espoused. Neither did he only respect his mother whilst he was here, but he took care of her too when he was going hence. Yea, all the pains he suffered upon the cross could not make him forget his duty to her that bore him ; but seeing her standing by the cross, as himself hung on it, he committed her to the care of his beloved disciple, who ‘ took her to

¹ Luke, ii. 51.

² Luke, ii. 49.

his own home.’¹ Now as our Saviour did, so are we bound to carry ourselves to our earthly parents, whatsoever their temper or condition be in this world. Though God hath blessed some of us perhaps with greater estates than ever he blessed them, yet we must not think ourselves above them, nor be at all the less respectful to them. Christ, we see, was infinitely above his mother, yet as she was his mother, he was both subject and respectful to her. He was not ashamed to own her as she stood by the cross, but, in the view and hearing of all there present, gave his disciple a charge to take care of her; leaving us an example, that such amongst us as have parents, provide for them if they need it, as for our children, both while we live, and when we come to die.

And as he was to his natural, so was he too to his civil parents, the magistrates under which he lived, submissive and faithful: for though as he was God, he was infinitely above them in heaven, yet as he was man, he was below them on earth, having committed all civil power into their hands, without reserving any at all for himself. So that though they received their commission from him, yet now himself could not act without receiving a commission from them. And therefore having no commission from them to do it, he would not intrench so much upon their privilege and power, as to determine the controversy betwixt the two brethren contending about their inheritance: ‘Man,’ saith he, ‘who made me a judge or a divider over you?’² And to show his submission to the civil magistrates, as highly as possibly he could, rather

¹ John, xix. 27.

² Luke, xii. 14.

than offend them, he wrought a miracle to pay the tax which they had charged upon him.¹ And when the officers were sent to take him, though he had more than twelve legions of angels at his service to have fought for him if he had pleased, yet he would not employ them, nor suffer his own disciples to make any resistance.² And though some of late days, who call themselves Christians, have acted quite contrary to our blessed Saviour in this particular, I hope better things of my readers, even that they will behave themselves more like Christ, who, though he was supreme Governor of the world, yet would not resist, but submitted to the civil power, which himself had entrusted men withal.

Moreover, although whilst he was here, he was really not only the best but greatest man upon earth, yet he carried himself to others with that meekness, humility, and respect, as if he had been the least; as he never admired any man for his riches, so neither did he despise any man for his poverty; poor men and rich were all alike to him. He was as lowly and respectful to the lowest, as he was to the highest that he conversed with: he affected no titles of honour, nor gaped after popular air, but submitted himself to the meanest services that he could, for the good of others, even to the washing his own disciples' feet, and all to teach us that we can never think too lowly of ourselves, nor do any thing that is beneath us; propounding himself as our example, especially in this particular: 'Learn of me,' saith he, 'for I am meek and lowly in heart.'³

¹ Matt. xvii. 27. ² Matt. xxvi. 52, 53. ³ Matt. xi. 29.

His humility also was the more remarkable, in that his bounty and goodness to others was so great, for 'he went about doing good.'¹ Wheresoever you read he was, you read still of some good work or other he did there. Whatsoever company he conversed with, they still went better from him than they came unto him, if they came out of a good end. By him, as himself said, 'the blind received their sight, and the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.'² Yea, it is observable, that we never read of any person whatsoever that came to him, desiring any kindness or favour of him, but he still received it, and that whether he was friend or foe. For indeed, though he had many inveterate and implacable enemies in the world, yet he bore no grudge or malice against them, but expressed as much love and favour for them as to his greatest friends. Insomuch, that when they had gotten him upon the cross, and fastened his hands and feet unto it, in the midst of all that pain and torment which they put him to, he still prayed for them.³

Oh! how happy, how blessed a people should we be, could we but follow our blessed Saviour in this particular! How well would it be with us, could we but be thus loving to one another, as Christ was to all, even his most bitter enemies! We may assure ourselves it is not only our misery but our sin too, unless we be so. And our sin will be the greater, now we know our Master's pleasure, unless we do it. And therefore, let all such

¹ Acts, x. 38.² Matt. xi. 5.³ Luke, xxiii. 34.

amongst us, as desire to carry ourselves as Christ himself did, and as becometh his disciples in the world, begin here.

Be submissive and obedient both to our parents and governors, humble in our own sight, despise none, but be charitable, loving, and good to all: by this shall all men know that we are Christ's disciples indeed.

Having thus seen our Saviour's carriage towards men, we shall now consider his piety and devotion towards God: not as if it was possible for me to express the excellency and perfection of those religious acts which he performed continually within his soul to God, every one of his faculties being as entire in itself, and as perfect in its acts, as it was first made or designed to be. There was no darkness, nor so much as gloominess in his mind, no error nor mistake in his judgment, no bribery nor corruption in his conscience, no obstinacy nor perverseness in his will, no irregularity nor disorder in his affections, no spot, no blot, no blemish, not the least imperfection or infirmity in his whole soul. And therefore, even whilst his body was on earth, his head and heart were still in heaven. For he never troubled his head, nor so much as concerned himself about any thing here below, any further than to do all the good he could, his thoughts being wholly taken up with considering how to advance God's glory and man's eternal happiness. And as for his heart, that was the altar on which the sacred fire of divine love was always burning, the flames whereof continually ascended up to heaven, being accompanied with the most ardent and fervent desires of, and delight in, the chiefest good.

But it must not be expected that I should give an exact description of that eminent and most perfect holiness which our blessed Saviour was inwardly adorned with, and continually employed in; which I am as unable to express as desirous to imitate. But howsoever, I shall endeavour to mind the reader in general of such acts of piety and devotion, which are particularly recorded, on purpose for our imitation.

First, therefore, it is observed of our Saviour, that 'from a child he increased in wisdom as he did in stature.'¹ Where by wisdom we are to understand the knowledge of God and divine things. For our Saviour having taken our nature into his person, with all its frailties and infirmities, as it is a created being, he did not in that nature presently know all things which were to be known. It is true, as God, he then knew all things as well as he had from all eternity; but we are now speaking of him as man, like one of us in all things except sin. But we continue some considerable time after we are born before we know any thing, or come to the use of our reason; the rational soul not being able to exert or manifest itself until the natural phlegm and radical moisture of the body, which in infants is predominant, be so digested that the body be rightly qualified, and its organs fitted for the soul to work upon, and to make use of. And though our Saviour came to the use of his reason, as man, far sooner than we are wont to do, yet we must not think that he knew all things as soon as he was born; for that the nature he assumed was not capa-

¹ Luke, ii. 52.

ble of ; neither could he then be said, as he is, to increase in wisdom, for where there is a perfection there can be no increase.

But here, before we proceed further, it will be necessary to answer an objection which some may make against this. For, if our Saviour as man knew not all things, then he was not perfect, not absolutely free from sin, ignorance itself being a sin.

To this I have these things to answer ; first, it is no sin for a creature to be ignorant of some things, because it is impossible for a creature to know all things ; for to be omniscient is God's prerogative, neither is a creature capable of it, because he is but finite, whereas the knowledge of all things, or omniscience, is itself an infinite act, and therefore to be performed only by an infinite being. Hence it is that no creature in the world ever was, or ever could be made omniscient ; but there are many things which Adam in his integrity, and the very angels themselves are ignorant of ; as our Saviour, speaking of the day of judgment, saith, ' Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'¹ But the angels are nevertheless perfect, because they know not this. Nay, it is observable that the Son himself, as man, knew it not : neither, saith he, ' the Son, but the Father ;' and if he knew it not then, much less was it necessary for him to know it when a child.

Secondly, as to be ignorant of some things is no sin, so neither is any ignorance at all sin, but that whereby a man is ignorant of what he is bound to know : ' For all sin is the transgression of the law.'

¹ Mark, xiii. 32.

And therefore, if there be no law obliging me to know such or such things, I do not sin by being ignorant of them, for I transgress no law. Now, though all men are bound by the law of God to know him, and their duty to him, yet infants, so long as infants, are not, neither can be obnoxious or subject to that law, they being in a natural incapacity, yea, impossibility to perform it; but as they become by degrees capable of knowing any thing, they are obliged questionless to know him first, from whom they receive their knowledge.

And thus it was that our blessed Saviour perfectly fulfilled the law of God; in that although he might still continue ignorant of many things, yet howsoever he all along knew all that he was bound to know, and as he grew by degrees more and more capable of knowing any thing, so did he increase still more in true wisdom, or in the knowledge of God: so that by that time he was twelve years old, he was able to dispute with the great doctors and learned Rabbies among the Jews; and after that, as he grew in stature, so did he grow in wisdom too, and in favour both with God and man.

And verily, although we did not follow our blessed Saviour in this particular when we were children, we ought howsoever to endeavour it now we are men and women, even to grow in wisdom, and every day add something to our spiritual stature, so as to let never a day pass over our heads, without being better acquainted with God's goodness to us, or our duty to him. And by this example of our Saviour's growing in wisdom when a child, we should also learn to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and not to strive so much to make them

rich, as to use all means to make them wise and good, that they may do as their Saviour did, even grow in wisdom and in stature, and in the favour both of God and man.

And as our Saviour grew in wisdom when a child, so did he use and manifest it when he came to be a man, by devoting himself wholly unto the service of the living God, and to the exercise of all true grace and virtue; wherein his blessed soul was so much taken up, that he had neither time nor heart to mind those toys and trifles, which silly mortals upon earth are so much apt to dote on. It is true, all the world was his, but he had given it all away to others, not reserving for himself so much as a house to put his head in.¹ And what money he had hoarded up, you may gather from his working a miracle to pay his tribute or poll-money, which came not to much above a shilling. Indeed, he came into the world, and went out again, without ever taking any notice of any pleasures, honours, or riches in it, as if there had been no such thing here, as really there was not, or ever will be; all the pomp and glory of this deceitful world having no other being or existence, but only in our dis-tempered fancies and imaginations; and therefore our Saviour, whose fancy was sound, and his imagination untainted, looked upon all the world and the glory of it as not worthy to be looked upon, seeing nothing in it wherefore it should be desired. And therefore, instead of spending his time in the childish pursuit of clouds and shadows, he made the service of God not only his business, but his recreation too, his food, as well as work. 'It is

¹ Matt. viii. 20.

my meat,' saith he, 'to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.'¹ This was all the riches, honours, and pleasures which he sought for in the world, even to do the will of him that sent him thither, to finish the work which he came about; and so he did before he went away: 'Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou sentest me to do.'² If, therefore, we would be Christ's disciples, so as to follow him, we see what we must do, and how we must behave and carry ourselves whilst we are here below; we must not spend our time, nor throw away our precious and short-lived days upon the trifles and impertinencies of this transient world, as if we came hither for nothing else but to take and scrape up a little dust and dirt together, or to wallow ourselves like swine in the mire of carnal pleasures and delights. No, we may assure ourselves we have greater things to do, and far more noble designs to carry on whilst we continue in this vale of tears, even 'to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and to make our calling and election sure,' and to serve God here, so as to enjoy him for ever. This is the work we came about, and which we must not only do, but do it too with pleasure and delight, and never leave until we have accomplished it; we must make it our only pleasure to please God, account it our only honour to honour him, and esteem his love and favour to be the only wealth and riches that we can enjoy; we must think ourselves no further happy, than we find ourselves to be truly holy, and therefore devote our lives wholly to him, in

¹ John, iv. 34.² Ibid. xvii. 4.

whom we live. This is to live as Christ lived, and by consequence as Christians ought to do.

I might here instance in several other acts of piety and devotion, which our Saviour was not only eminent for, but continually exercised himself in, as his humble and perfect submission and resignation of his own will to God's, his most ardent love unto him, and zeal for him, as also his firm and steadfast trust and confidence in him; so that nothing could ever disquiet or discompose his mind, but still his heart was fixed trusting in the Lord. In all which, it is both our duty and interest to follow him; our happiness as well as holiness consisting in our dependence upon God, and inclinations to him.

But we should do well to observe withal, that our Saviour performed external as well as inward worship and devotion unto God; particularly we often find him praising God and praying unto him; and that with his eyes lift up to heaven in a most humble and reverential posture;¹ yea, when he was to choose and ordain some of his disciples to the work of the ministry, and to succeed him after his departure, under the name of apostles, he spent the night before in prayer to God.² I confess the words there used, *ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τῶν θεῶν*, will scarce admit of that interpretation or exposition, signifying rather in a strict sense, that he went into a place appointed for prayer, which was usually called *προσευχή*, a place of prayer, which kind of places were very frequent in Judea, and some of them continued till Epiphanius's time, as himself asserts; and they were only plots of

¹ John, xvii. 1; Luke, xxii. 41; Matt. xxvi. 39.

² Luke, vi. 12.

ground inclosed with a wall, and open above, and were ordinarily, if not always, upon mountains, whither the Jews used to resort to pray together in great multitudes. And this seems to be the proper meaning of these words, where our Saviour is said to go into a mountain, and to continue all night, ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'in one of these proseuchas of God, a place dedicated to his service.' Yet, howsoever, we cannot suppose but that he went thither to do what the place whither he went was designed for, even to pray : and by consequence, that seeing he stayed there all night, questionless he spent the whole night in prayer and meditation, in order to so great a work as the ordaining his apostles was.

Here, therefore, is another copy which our master Christ hath set us to write after ; a lesson that all must learn and practise that would be his disciples. Though we ordinarily converse with nothing but dirt and clay, and with our fellow-worms on earth, yet as Christ did, so should we often retire from the tumults and bustles of the world to converse with him that made us ; both to praise him for the mercies we have received, and to pray unto him for what we want ; only we shall do well to have a care that we do not perform so solemn a duty as this is, after a careless and perfunctory manner, because none sees but God ; for his seeing us is infinitely more than if all the world besides should see us ; and we must still remember that prayer is the greatest work that a creature can be engaged in, and therefore to be performed with the greatest seriousness, reverence, and earnestness that possibly we can raise up our spirits to. And besides our daily devotions which

we owe and ought to pay to God, whensoever we set upon any great and weighty business, we must be sure to follow our Saviour's steps in setting some time apart proportionably to the business we undertake, wherein to ask God's counsel, and desire his direction and blessing in the most serious and solemn manner that possibly we can. I need not tell the reader what benefit we shall receive by this means, none of us that shall try it, but will soon find it by experience.

I shall observe only one thing more concerning our Saviour's devotion, and that is, that although he took all occasions to instruct and admonish his disciples and followers, whether in the fields or upon the mountains, in private houses, even wheresoever he could find an opportunity to do it; yet upon sabbath-days he always frequented the public worship of God; he went into the synagogues, places appointed for public prayers, and reading and hearing the word, a thing which I fear many amongst us do not think of, or at least not rightly consider it; for if they did, they would not dare methinks to walk so directly contrary to our blessed Saviour in this particular; for St. Luke tells us, that 'when he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day.'¹ From whence none of us but may easily observe that our Saviour did not go into a synagogue or church by the by, to see what they were doing there, neither did he happen to go in by chance upon the sabbath-day, but it was his custom and constant practice to do so, even to go each sabbath-day to the public

¹ Luke, iv. 16.

ordinances, there to join with the congregation in performing their service and devotions to Almighty God.

And here I must take leave to say, that was there no other law, nor any other obligations upon us (as there be many) to frequent the public worship of God, this practice and example of our blessed Saviour doth sufficiently and effectually oblige us all to a constant attendance upon the public ordinances. For as we are Christians, and profess ourselves to be his disciples, we are all bound to follow him, he commands us here and elsewhere to do it; and certainly there is nothing that we can be obliged to follow him in, more than in the manner of his worshipping God. And therefore, whosoever out of any humour, fancy, or slothfulness, shall presume to neglect the public worship of God, he doth not only act contrary to Christ's example, but transgresses also his command, that enjoins him to follow that example. What they who are guilty of this will have to answer for themselves, when they come to stand before Christ's tribunal, I know not. But this I know, that all those who profess themselves to be Christians, should follow Christ in all things that they can, and by consequence in this particular; and that they sin who do not.

But in whatsoever other things we may fail, I know the generality of us do herein follow our Saviour's steps, that we are usually present at the public worship of God; but then I hope this is not all that we follow him in, but that as we follow him to the public ordinances, so we do likewise in our private devotions, yea, and in our behaviour both to God and man; which that we may the

better do, I have endeavoured to show wherein we ought especially to follow Christ, in being obedient to our parents, subject to our governors, lowly to the lowest, loving and charitable unto all; as also in growing in wisdom and the knowledge of God, in contemning the world, in devoting ourselves wholly to the service of God, in resigning our wills to his, in loving of him, in trusting on him above all things else, in daily praying unto God, and frequenting his public ordinances; to which I may also add, in denying ourselves, and taking up our crosses, which he himself hath done before us, as well as required of us.

What now remains, but that seeing the steps wherein our Saviour walked, we should all resolve to walk together in them. And I hope that I need not use arguments to persuade any to it; it is enough, one would think, that Christ himself, whose name we bear, expects and commands it from us. And in that the sum of all religion consisteth in obeying and following Christ, the circumstances of whose life are recorded on purpose that we may imitate him unto the utmost of our power, not only in the matter but manner of our actions, even in the circumstances as well as in the substance of them.

But this I dare say we all both know and believe, even that it is our duty to follow Christ; and therefore it is a sad, a dismal thing to consider, that among them that know it there are so few that do it; but even those that go under the name of Christians themselves, do more generally follow the beasts of the field, or the very fiends of hell, rather than Christ our Saviour. For all covetous worldlings that look no higher than earth, and all luxurious epicures that labour after no other but sensual

pleasures, whom do they imitate but the beasts that perish? And as for the proud and arrogant, the deceitful and malicious seducers of their brethren, and oppressors of their neighbours, all backbiters and false accusers, all deriders of religion, and apostates from it, they are of their father the devil, and his works they will do. And if all such persons should be taken from amongst us, how few would be left behind that follow Christ? Very few indeed! but I hope there would be some. And oh, that all who read this would be in the number of them! even that they would all from this day forward resolve to come as near our blessed Saviour in all their actions, both to God and man, as possibly they can! which if we once did, what holy, what happy lives should we then lead! How should we antedate both the work and joys of heaven! And how certain should we be to be there ere long, where Christ, that is the pattern of our lives here, will be the portion of our souls for ever!

Thus I have shown what Christ requires of those who would be his disciples, enjoining them to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. And now I have done my duty in explaining these words, it is all my readers' as well as mine to practise them, which I heartily wish we would all resolve to do; and I must say it highly concerns us all to do so, for we can never be saved but by Christ, nor by him, unless we be his disciples; neither can we be his disciples, unless we do what is here required of us. And therefore, if we care not whether we be saved or no, we may think no more of these things, nor trouble our heads about them; but if we really desire to come to heaven, let us remember, he who

alone can bring us thither, hath told us, that 'we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow him.'

THOUGHTS UPON OUR CALL AND ELECTION.

'MANY are called,' saith our Saviour, 'but few chosen.'¹ O dreadful sentence, who is able to hear it without trembling and astonishment! If he had said, that of all men that are born in the world there are but few saved, this would not have struck such a fear and horror into us; for we might still hope that though Turks, Jews, and heathens, which are far the greatest part of the world, should all perish, yet we few in comparison of them, who are baptized into his name, who profess his gospel, who enjoy his ordinances, who are admitted to his sacraments, that all who are called to him, might be chosen and saved by him; but that of those very persons who are called, there are but few chosen: what a sharp and terrible sentence is this! Who can bear it? Especially considering by whom it was pronounced, even by Christ himself. If a mere man had spoken it, we might hope it was but a human error; if an angel had uttered it, 'we might think it possible he might be mistaken; but that Christ himself the eternal Son of God, who is truth, and infallibility itself, that he should assert

¹ Matt: xxii. 14

it; that he who laid down his life to redeem ours, that he who came into the world on purpose to call and save us, that he in whom alone it is possible for us to be chosen to salvation, that he should say, 'Many are called but few chosen:' this is a hard saying indeed, which may justly make our ears to tingle, and our hearts to tremble at the hearing of it. And yet we see our Saviour here expressly saith it, and not only here neither, but again, Matt. xx. 16. Whence we may gather, that it is a thing he would have us often think of, and a matter of more than ordinary importance, in that he did not think it enough to tell us of it at once, but he repeated it in the same words again, that we might be sure to remember it, and take especial notice of it, that 'many are called but few chosen.'

In which words, that we may understand our Saviour's meaning aright, we must first consider the occasion of them in this place, which in brief was this. Our Saviour, according to the custom that obtained in those days amongst the wise men of the east, delighting to use parables, thereby to represent his heavenly doctrine more clearly to the understanding of his hearers, in this chapter compares the 'kingdom of God to a certain king that made a marriage for his son, and sent his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding.'¹ Where by the king he means the eternal God, the universal monarch of the world, who intending to make a marriage betwixt his Son and the church, styled the spouse of Christ, he sent to his guest before bidden, even the Jews, the seed of Abraham his friend, and at that time his peculiar people. But

¹ Matt. xxii. 2, 3.

they not hearkening to the first invitation, he sends to them again.¹ Yet they still made light of it, having, it seems, as we most have, other business to mind, and therefore went their way, some to their farms, others to their merchandize.² By which our Saviour intimates, that one great reason why men accept not of the overtures of grace made unto them in the gospel, is, because their minds are taken up with the cares of this world, looking upon their farms, their trades and merchandize, as things of greater moment than heaven and eternal glory. Yea, some of them took the servants which were sent to invite them, 'and treated them spitefully, and slew them.'³ Why, what is the matter? What injury have the servants, the prophets, the apostles, or ministers of Christ done them? What, do they come to oppress them, to take their estates from them? To disgrace or bring them into bondage? No, they only come to invite them to a marriage-feast, to tender them the highest comforts and refreshments imaginable both for their souls and bodies. And this is all the recompence they give them for their kindness, not only to refuse it, but to abuse them that bring it? Well might this glorious king be angry and incensed at such an affront offered him as this was, and therefore, 'he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city,'⁴ as we all know he did to the murdering Jews, who soon after this were destroyed, and their royal city Jerusalem burnt. But now the feast is prepared, shall there be none to eat it? Yes, for seeing they who

¹ Matt. xxii. 4.³ Ib. verse 6.² Ib. verse 5.⁴ Ib. verse 7.

were first bidden were not worthy to partake of his dainties, he orders his servants to go into the highways, and bid as many as they could find to the marriage.¹ The Jews having refused the gospel, God sends to invite the Gentiles to it, who hitherto had been reckoned aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, 'strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.'² But now they are also bidden to the wedding, they are called to Christ, and invited to partake of all the privileges of the gospel. For the servants having received the command, 'went out into the highway,' even into all the by-places and corners of the world, 'and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests.' But amongst these too, when the king came to see his guests he saw one that had not on a wedding-garment.'³ Under which are represented all of the same kind, who have not on the wedding-garment, that is, who walk not worthy of the vocation where-with they are called, not being clothed with humility, faith, and other graces suitable to a Christian. All which, notwithstanding they were invited, yea, and come in too upon their invitation, yet they are cast out again into outer darkness.'⁴ And then he adds, 'for many are called, but few chosen;' as if he should have said, the Jews were called, but would not come; the Gentiles are called, they come, but some of them were cast out again; so that of the many which are called, there

¹ Matt. xxi. 6, 9.

² Eph. ii. 10, 12.

³ Matt. xxii. 11.

⁴ Ib. xxii. 12, 13.

are but few chosen. 'For many are called, but few chosen.'

Which short, but pithy saying of our blessed Saviour that we may rightly understand, we shall first consider the former part of it, 'Many are called,' and then the latter, 'but few chosen.' That we may apprehend the full meaning of the first part of this proposition, 'Many are called,' there are three things to be considered :

I. What is here meant by being called.

II. How men are called.

III. How it appears that 'many are called.'

I. As for the first, what we are here to understand by being called. We must know that this is meant only of God's voice to mankind, making known his will and pleasure to them, calling upon them to act accordingly, and so inviting them to his service here, and to the enjoyment of his presence hereafter.

But to explain the nature of it more particularly, we must consider the *terminus a quo*, and the *terminus ad quod*, what it is God calls us from, and what it is he calls us to, both which we shall speak to, jointly or together.

1. He calls us from darkness to light, from error and ignorance to truth and knowledge. As he made us rational and knowing creatures at first, so he would have us to be again, so as to understand and know him that made us, and that gave us the power of understanding and knowing ; and not employ the little knowledge we have only about the affairs of our bodies, our trades, and callings in this world, nor yet in learning arts and sciences only, but principally about the concerns of our

immortal souls, that we may know him that is the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; without which, all our other knowledge will avail us nothing. We are still in the dark, and know not whither we are going; out of which dark, and by consequence uncomfortable as well as dangerous estate, God of his infinite mercy is pleased to call us, that we 'should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into this marvellous light.'

2. God calls us from superstition and idolatry, to serve and worship him. For we are called to turn 'from idols to serve the living and true God.' Thus he called Abraham out of Chaldea, and his posterity the Israelites out of Egypt, places of idolatry, that they might serve and worship him, and him alone. Thus he called our ancestors of this nation out of their heathenish superstitions to the knowledge and worship of himself, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. And thus he called upon us to 'flee from idolatry,' not only from heathenish or popish, but from all idolatry whatsoever, and by consequence from covetousness, which God himself tells us in plain terms is idolatry.⁴ And so indeed is our allowing ourselves in any known sin whatsoever; for we idolize it by setting it up in our hearts and affections, instead of God; yea, and bow down to it, and serve it, though not in our bodies, yet in our souls, which is the highest kind of idolatry, which God calls us from.

3. Hence he also calls us from all manner of sin

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

² 1 Cor. x. 14.

³ 1 Thes. i. 9.

⁴ Col. iii. 5.

and profaneness, to holiness and piety, both in our affections and actions. For, as the apostle saith, 'God hath not called us to uncleanness but to holiness.'¹ Where by uncleanness he means all manner of lusts and corruptions which defile the soul, and make it unclean and impure in the sight of God. These God doth not call us to, but from : it is holiness and universal righteousness that he calls us to, and commands us to follow. This is the great thing that Christ in his gospel calls for : 'For the grace of God,' which is in his gospel, 'hath now appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.'² 'He now commandeth all men every where to repent and turn to God.'³ Hence he is said to have 'called us with an holy calling.'⁴ And 'as he who hath called us is holy,' so ought we to be 'holy in all manner of conversation.'⁵ Thus therefore we are called to be a holy people, a people zealous of good works, a people wholly devoted to the service of the living God. In brief we are called to be saints, a people consecrated unto God ; and therefore as every vessel in the temple was holy, so we being called to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, every thing in us should be holy : our thoughts should be holy, our affections holy, our words holy, our desires holy, every faculty of our souls, every member of our bodies, and every action of our lives, should be holy, every thing within us, every thing about us, every thing that comes from us should be holy, and all

¹ 1 Thes. iv. 7.² Titus, ii. 11, 12.³ Acts, xxv. 20.⁴ 2 Tim. i. 9.⁵ 1 Pet. i. 15.

because our calling is holy; and we ought to 'walk worthy of our vocation wherewith we are called.'

4. God calls us from carnal and temporal things, to mind heaven and eternal glory. He sees and observes how eager we are in prosecuting of this world's vanities, and therefore calls upon us to leave doting upon such transitory and unsatisfying trifles, and to mind the things that belong to our everlasting peace; not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we 'may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God.'¹ To set our 'affections upon things above, and not upon things that are upon the earth.'² To 'seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness'³ in the first place. Hence it is styled 'an heavenly calling,'⁴ and 'an high calling,'⁵ because we are called by it to look after high and heavenly things. He that made us hath so much kindness for us, that it pities him to see us moil and toil, and spend our strength and labour about such low and pitiful, such impertinent and unnecessary things, which himself knows can never satisfy us; and therefore he calls and invites us to himself, and to the enjoyment of his own perfections, which are able to fill and satiate our immortal souls.

5. Hence lastly, we are called from misery and danger, to the state of happiness and felicity. As he called Lot out of Sodom, when fire and brimstone were ready to fall upon it; so he calls us from the world and sin, because otherwise wrath

¹ Eph. iv. 1.

⁴ Matt. vi. 33.

² Rom. xii. 2.

⁵ Heb. iii. 1.

³ Col. iii. 2.

⁶ Phil. iii. 14.

and fury will fall upon our heads. Or, as he called Noah into the ark, to preserve him from the overflowing flood ; so he calleth us into his service, and to the faith of his Son, that so we may escape that flood of misery which will suddenly drown the impenitent and unbelieving world. And therefore we must not think that he calls and invites to him, because he stands in need of us, or wants our service ; no, it is not because he cannot be happy without us, but because we cannot be happy without him, nor in him neither, unless we come unto him. This is the only reason why he calls us so earnestly to him : ‘ For as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel !’¹ Let us not stand therefore pausing upon it, and considering whether we shall hearken to God’s call or no, nor say severally within ourselves, how shall I part with my profits ? How shall I deny myself the enjoyment of my sensual pleasures ? How shall I forsake my darling and beloved sins ? But rather say, how shall I abide the judgment of the great God ? How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation as I am now called and invited to ? For we may assure ourselves this is the great and only end why God calls so pathetically upon us to come unto him, that so we may be delivered from his wrath, and enjoy his love and favour for ever.

Thus we see what it is that God calls mankind both from and to ; he calls them from darkness to light, from idolatry to true religion, from sin to

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

holiness, from earth to heaven, and from the deepest misery, to the highest happiness that they are capable of.

II. The next thing to be considered is, how God is pleased to call us; for which we must know, that,

1. He hath vouchsafed to call some with his own mouth, as I may so speak, even by immediate revelations from himself. Thus he called Abraham and Moses, and several of the patriarchs of the Old Testament. And thus he called Paul, Christ himself calling from heaven to him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'¹ And it is observable, that whosoever were thus called, they always obeyed. But this is not the calling here spoken of.

2. God calls all mankind by his works and providences. All the creatures in the world are so many tongues declaring the wisdom, power, goodness, and glory of God, unto us, and so call upon us to praise, honour, and obey him. And all his providences have their several and distinct voices: his mercies bespeak our affections, and his judgments our fear. 'Hear ye,' saith he, 'the rod, and who hath appointed it.'² The rod, it seems, hath a voice which we are bound to hear. But though many, yea all the world be called this way, yet neither is this the calling our Saviour means, when he saith, 'many are called, but few chosen.'

3. Lastly, Therefore God hath called many by the ministry of his word, and of his servants the prophets, the apostles and their successors declaring it, and explaining it to them. Thus God spake to our fathers by the prophets, rising up early, and

¹ Acts, ix. 4.

² Micah, vi. 9.

sending them to call sinners to repentance, by showing them their sins, and the dangerous consequences of them. As when he sent his prophet Isaiah, he bids him 'cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice as a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.'¹ And they being convinced of, and humbled for their sins, then he sent his prophets to invite them to accept of grace and pardon from him, saying, in the language of the same prophet, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'² And God having thus 'at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.'³ Who therefore said with his own mouth, that 'he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'⁴ Hence as soon as ever he entered upon his ministry, he called to mankind, saying, 'Repent, and believe the gospel.'⁵ And 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.'⁶ And when he was to depart hence, he left orders with his apostles, to go and call all nations, and teach them what he had commanded, promising that himself would be with them 'to the end of the world.'⁷ By virtue therefore of this commission, not only the apostles themselves, but all succeeding ministers in all ages to the end of the world, are sent to call mankind to embrace the

¹ Isa. lviii. 1.² Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3.³ Heb. i. 1, 2.⁴ Matt. ix. 13.⁵ Mark, i. 15.⁶ Matt. xi. 28.⁷ Ib. xxviii. 19, 20.

gospel, and to accept of the terms propounded in it. So that when we his ministers preach unto them, or call upon them to repent and turn to God, they must not think we come in our own name; for, as the apostle tells the Corinthians, 'we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'¹ Hence in Scripture we are called also κήρυκες, heralds; and our office is κηρύσσειν, to proclaim as heralds, the will and pleasure of almighty God unto mankind, to offer peace and pardon to all that have rebelled against our Lord and master the King of heaven, if they will now come in, and submit themselves unto him; if not, in a most solemn and dreadful manner, to denounce his wrath and heavy displeasure against them. So that as the angel was sent to call Lot out of Sodom, when the Lord was going to rain fire and brimstone from heaven upon it: so God being ready every moment to shower down his fury and vengeance upon the impenitent and unbelieving world, he sends us to call men out of it, 'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God,'² and to invite them to his court, to live with him, and be happy for ever.

And that this is the proper meaning of our blessed Saviour in this place, where he saith, 'many are called,' is plain from the parable whereon these words are grounded; where the king is said to have sent his servants to call the guests which were bidden to the marriage-feast, and put words into their mouth, telling them what to say,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20.

² Acts, xxvi. 18.

as he hath given us also instructions, how to call and invite mankind in his holy word. And when of the many which were called, there would but few come; hence our Saviour uttered this expression, that 'many are called, but few chosen.' From whence it is clear and obvious that our Saviour means not such as were called immediately from God himself, for they were but few; nor yet such as are called by the works of creation and providence, for so not many only, but all are called; but he means such as are called by his word, and by his servants and ministers reading, preaching, and explaining of it.

III. And verily that many have been, and still are called in this sense, which is the next thing I promised to show, I need not stand long to prove. For our Saviour, having commanded his apostles to go and call all nations to his faith, which is the proper meaning of that place, Matt. xxviii. 19, it cannot be denied, but that the apostles presently dispersed themselves, and preached the gospel to all nations; which they did so effectually, that in a few years after, even in St. Paul's time, 'the mystery of the gospel was made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.'¹ And in St. John's time, 'some were redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'² Yea, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed, that the ancients compared it to lightning, that immediately dispersed itself, and was seen all the world over. So that in less than two hundred years, "the Christian religion was received all

¹ Rom. xvi. 26.

² Rev. vii. 9.

the world over, from east to west,"¹ as Lactantius, who then lived, asserts. From which time therefore, how many thousands of millions of souls have been called to the faith of Christ by the preaching of his gospel? And not to speak of other nations, how soon did the Sun of righteousness rise upon these western parts of the world, and particularly upon this nation wherein we dwell! several of Christ's own disciples and apostles, as Simon Peter, Simon Zelotes, James the son of Zebedee, Joseph of Arimathea, Aristobulus, and St. Paul himself, being all recorded by ecclesiastical writers to have preached the gospel to this nation. Be sure in less than two hundred years the Christian faith was here received. Tertullian himself saying expressly, "The Romans could scarcely come at Britany, but Christ hath conquered it."² And soon after him, Arnobius saith that the gospel, "was not concealed either from the Indians in the eastern parts of the world, nor from the Britons themselves in the west."³ And since the gospel was first here planted, how many have been called by it to the faith of Christ? Yea, through the mercy of the most high God, how many at this moment are called all the nation over? And to come still closer to ourselves, all that read this, have, I doubt not, been often called heretofore, and now are called again. For in the name of the most high God, and of his Son Christ, 'I pray and beseech you all, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from

¹ "Ab ortu solis ad occasum lex Christiana suscepta est."

² "Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo subdita."

³ "Nec ipsos Indos lateris a parte orientis, nec ipsos Britannos, a parte Occidentis."

fleshly lusts which war against the soul,'¹ to repent of your sins, and believe the gospel. I call and invite you also to accept the offers of grace and pardon which are made you in Jesus Christ, to sit down with him at his own table, and feed by faith upon his body and blood, that so you may partake of the merits of his death and passion, and so live with him for evermore. Thus you are all called, but I fear there are but few chosen.

Having thus explained and proved the first part of this proposition, that 'many are called,' we must now consider the meaning, truth, and reasons of the other part of it, 'but few are chosen.' Πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσι κλητοὶ, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοὶ: 'For many are called, but few chosen;' that is, there are but few which are so approved of by God, as to be elected and chosen from the other part of the world, to inherit eternal life. That this is the main drift and scope of our blessed Saviour in these words, is plain from the foregoing parable, which gave him occasion to pronounce them: for there all that were first called refused to come to the marriage-feast which they were invited to, and of them which came, some had not on their wedding-garment; that is, although they came in to the outward profession of the gospel, yet did not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and therefore they likewise were excluded; upon which our Saviour adds these words, 'for many are called, but few chosen.' From whence it is easy to observe his meaning in general to be only this, that although many were called to partake of the privi-

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

leges and graces of his gospel, yet seeing of those who were called, many would not come at all, and of those who come, many do not come so as the gospel requires of them, with their wedding-garment on: hence of the many who are called, there are but few chosen to partake of the marriage-feast, that is, of the glorious promises made in the gospel, to those that come aright unto it. Few, not absolutely in themselves considered, but few comparatively in respect of the many which are not chosen; or rather few in comparison of the many which are called. For if we consider them absolutely in themselves, they are certainly very many, our Saviour himself saith, 'Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham,'¹ &c. And in the Revelations you read of many thousands that were sealed of every tribe. Yea, 'there was a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white, and palms in their hands.'² Inso-much that for all the numberless number of fallen or apostatized angels, St. Austin was of opinion, that there will be as many men saved, as there are angels damned, or rather more. For, saith he, upon the fall of the angels and men, he determined to gather together, by his infinite grace, so many out of the mortal progeny, "that he might from thence make up and restore that part of angels which was fallen."³ "And so that beloved city which is above, may not be deprived of the number

¹ Matt. viii. 11.

² Rev. vii. 9.

³ "Ut inde suppleat et instauret partem quæ lapsa est angelorum."— Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 22, c. 1.

of its citizens, but perhaps rejoice in having more."¹ Which notion he grounds upon those words of our Saviour in this chapter, 'For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are *ισάγγελοι*, as the angels of God in heaven,'² or, as the words may be interpreted, they are equal to the angels, and equal in number to the fallen, as well as in quality to the elect angels, as that learned and pious father expounds it. But howsoever that be, this is certain, that the number of men chosen and saved will be very great, considered absolutely in themselves; and yet notwithstanding, if they be compared with the many more which are called, they are but very few. Christ's flock is, as himself styles it, *μικρὸν πώμνιον*, a very little, little flock,³ that is, in comparison of the vast multitudes of souls that flock after the world and sin. As in a garden there are but few choice flowers in comparison of the weeds that grow in it, there are but very few diamonds and precious stones in comparison of pebbles and gravel upon the sea-shore; and in the richest mines there is far more dross than gold and silver. So is it in the church of Christ; there is but little wheat, in comparison of the tares that come up with it; Christ hath a great many hangers-on, but few faithful and obedient servants; there are many that speak him very fair, and make a very plausible profession of the faith and religion which he taught, but where shall we find one that practiseth it? if there be here one, and there another, two or three in a parish, or perhaps in a

¹ "Ac sic illa dilecta et supera civitas non fraudetur suorum numero civium, quin etiam fortassis et ubcriore lætetur."—Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 22, c. 1.

² Matt. xxii. 30.

³ Luke, xii. 32.

whole city, what is this to the innumerable company of such as are called by him, and baptized into his name, and yet leave him to follow after the world and vanity? Oh, what just ground had our Saviour to say, 'Many are called, but few chosen?'

But to demonstrate the truth of this proposition still more fully, and as clearly as possibly I can, I must first lay down one principle as a postulatam, which I suppose all will acknowledge to be true, and that is this—that whatsoever profession a man makes of the Christian religion, it will avail him nothing without the practice of it; or if you will take it in our Saviour's own words, 'Not every one,' saith he, 'that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.'¹ Or, as the apostle expresseth it, 'For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.'² That is, it is not our hearing and knowing our duty that will stand us in any stead before God, but our doing of it; it is not our believing that we may be saved by believing in Christ, whereby we can be saved, without actual believing in him, without such a faith whereby we depend upon him, for the pardon and salvation of our immortal souls, and consequently for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, whereby we may be enabled to obey his gospel, and to perform all such things as himself hath told us are necessary in order to our everlasting happiness: and whatsoever faith we pretend to, unless it comes to this, that it puts us upon universal obedience to all the com-

¹ Matt. vii. 21.

² Rom. ii. 13.

mands of God, we may conclude it will do us no good, for it is not such a faith as Christ requires, which always works by love, conquers the world, subdues sin, purifies the heart, and sanctifies the whole soul wheresoever it comes. It is such a faith as this which is the wedding-garment, without which no man is chosen or admitted to partake of those celestial banquets, which Christ our Saviour hath provided for us. And therefore no man can have any ground at all to believe or hope himself to be elected or chosen to eternal salvation, that is not holy in all manner of conversation; God himself hath told us expressly, 'that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'¹ So that having God's own word for it, we may positively and confidently assert, that no man in the world can upon any just grounds be reputed as chosen by God, that doth not in all things, to the utmost of his power, conform himself, and adjust his actions to the laws and commands of God. So that how many soever are called, how many soever come into the outward profession of the Christian religion, yet none of them can be said to be chosen, but such as are real and true saints. And how few those are, is a matter which we have more cause to bewail than to prove. Howsoever, that we may see that we have but too much reason to believe this assertion of our blessed Saviour, that 'many are called but few chosen,' I desire we may but consider the state of Christendom in general, and weigh the lives and actions of all such as profess to believe in Christ, view them

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

well, and examine them by the gospel rules, and then we shall soon conclude that there are but few chosen ; or to bring it home more closely to ourselves, who are all called, and take out from amongst us all such persons as come not up to the terms of the gospel, and we shall find that there are but few behind, but few indeed who can be discerned and judged by the light either of reason or Scripture, to be chosen by God to eternal life. For take out from amongst us,

1. All atheistical persons, who though they are baptized into the name of Christ, and so are called to the faith of Christ, yet neither believe in Christ nor God, such fools as say in their heart ' there is no God.'¹ For all will grant, that they are not chosen by God, who do not so much as believe that there is any God to choose them. Neither can it be imagined that the all-wise God should choose such fools as these to be with him, who will not so much as acknowledge him to be. And yet how many such fools have we amongst us, whose practices have so depraved their principles, that they will not believe there is any God, because they wish there was none ; and when these are taken from amongst the called, I fear the number of the chosen amongst them will be much lessened.

2. Take out from amongst us all ignorant persons, that understand not the common principles of religion, or the fundamental articles of that faith which they are called to : for that these are not chosen, is plain, in that though they be called by Christ, yet they know not what he would have

¹ Psalm xiv. 1.

them do, nor yet who it is that calls them. And therefore, as God would have all men to be saved, so for that end he would have them come to the knowledge of the truth.¹ That is, he would have them know all such truths as himself hath revealed to them in the gospel, as necessary to be known in order to their eternal salvation, without which knowledge it is impossible for a man to perform what is required of him; for though a man may know his duty, and not do it, no man can do his duty unless he first know it. And therefore gross ignorance and saving faith cannot possibly consist or stand together; for saving faith is always joined with, or puts a man upon sincere obedience to all the commands of God: but how can any man obey the commands of God, who neither knows that God whose commands they are, nor yet what these commands are, which God will have him to obey? No, certainly, a blind man may as well follow his temporal calling, how intricate soever it be, as he that is grossly ignorant, the high calling of a Christian; for he is altogether incapable of it, and so not only unworthy, but unfit to be chosen to it. Hence, God himself hath told us, that he is so far from choosing such as live and die in this manner without understanding, that he will never show them any mercy or favour. 'For it is a people,' saith he, 'of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.'² Neither doth he ever blame mankind for any thing in the world more than for not knowing, and there-

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

² Isaiah, xxvii. 11.

fore not considering him that made and feeds them.¹ And that we may be still further assured that he chooseth no such persons to dwell with him, as do not know him and his commands, he hath given it us under his hand, that he rejects them, saying, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.'²

That, therefore, no persons that are grossly ignorant, and live and die in that condition, are chosen to eternal salvation, I suppose, the premises considered, all will acknowledge. But, alas! how many such persons are there in the world, how many amongst ourselves! How many who are very cunning and expert in the management of any worldly business, but are mere novices, or rather idiots in matters of true religion: or, as the prophet words it, 'who are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge!'³ How many such ignorant and sottish people are there in every corner of the land; and in this city itself! where they do or may hear the word of God read and expounded to them every day, and yet ask them seriously of the grounds of the Christian religion, and the reason of the hope that is in them, and they are no more able to give a satisfactory or rational answer, than if they had never heard of any such book as the Bible in the world, or had been born and bred in the remotest corners of America, where

¹ Isaiah, i. 2, 3; Hosea, iv. 1.

² Hosea, iv. 6.

³ Jer. iv. 22.

the sound of the gospel never yet came. But all such, how many soever they be, though they be called, they must stand aloof off; for so long as they are such, we may be confident they are not chosen. Insomuch, that should we take away no other from the number of the called, but only such as know not what they are called to, it would appear but too clearly to be true, that of the many which are called, there are but few chosen.

3. Take out from amongst us all vicious, profane, debauched and impenitent persons, all that make a mock of sin and that jeer at holiness, that live as without God in the world, as if they had neither God to serve, nor souls to save; as if there was neither a hell to avoid nor a heaven to enjoy, and therefore make it their business to gratify their flesh, and to indulge their appetite with carnal and sensual pleasures, looking no higher than to be fellow-sharers with the brutes that perish; such as in their bewitching cups stick not to fly in the face of heaven itself, and dare challenge God himself to damn them; and make lying their usual dialect, and swearing their pleasing rhetoric; and are so far from being troubled for their sins, that they take pleasure and delight in them; so far from being ashamed of them, that they make them their pride and glory, and so make it their pleasure to displease God, and their highest honour to dishonour him that is honour and perfection itself. For that no such persons as these who live and die in such notorious crimes upon earth, are chosen to live with God in heaven, none can deny that believe the Scriptures to be true, which in plain terms assures us of the contrary. 'Know ye not,'

saith the apostle, 'that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.'¹ And St. John tells us, that only they who do the commandments enter into the city of heaven: but 'without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'² So that all such persons, without timely repentance, are most certainly excluded from the number of the chosen. And how many are there amongst us, who allow themselves in some such sin or other; or rather, where shall we find a man that doth not? But to all persons that continue in such sin, I may say, stand you by, you have no ground as yet to think that you are chosen, but have rather all the reason in the world to believe, that if you go on in such a sinful course, you will never know what heaven or happiness is. But when all such are taken out of the number of the called, what a piteous scantling will be left behind! in plain terms, we have just cause to fear that ignorant and dissolute persons make up the greatest part of those who are called Christians.

4. Take out from amongst us all hypocritical and false-hearted persons, that seem indeed to be honest and good men, but still retain some secret sin or other, which will as certainly keep them out of heaven, as the most notorious and scandalous

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

² Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

crime that is; such as our Saviour compares to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear very beautiful, 'but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'¹ Such whose outward conversation is altogether unblamable; so that no man can charge them with theft, perjury, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; but in the mean while, they are malicious, uncharitable, censorious, proud, self-conceited, disobedient to parents or magistrates, covetous, ambitious, and the like. And so though they be free from those sins, which others are guilty of, yet they are guilty of as bad sins, which the others may be freed from. To which also may be added all such as make indeed a greater show of piety, and seem mighty zealous for the little circumstances of religion, but neglect the weightier matters of the law, the love of God, mercy, justice, and the like. But for all the vain hopes and high conceits that such persons may have of themselves, they are far from being such as the gospel requires them, and by consequence from the number of the chosen here spoken of. For the Pharisees were such persons as these, and yet our Saviour himself tells us, 'That except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no ways enter into the kingdom of God.'² And when he tells us elsewhere, 'that except we repent we must all likewise perish,'³ his meaning is, not that we must repent of some, or many, or most, but of all our sins, and so repent of them as to turn from them; and so turn

¹ Matt. xxiii. 27.² Matt. vi. 20.³ Luke, xiii. 3.

from all sin, as for the future to be holy in all manner of conversation, otherwise our Saviour himself assures us that he will never save us, but we must perish without remedy.

Let any man consider this, and then tell me what he thinks of the number of the chosen, whether it be not very small indeed, in comparison of the many which are called. For not to speak of other parts of Christendom, all the people of this nation are called to the faith of Christ; and how many they are, I cannot say we all know, for it is past any man's knowledge. But where is the man amongst us all, that doth not harbour some secret lust or other in his bosom: yea, of the many men in this nation, where is he that can say with David, 'I have kept myself from mine iniquity?' Or, to use the words of the prophet, 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of the city, and see now and know, and seek if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, that serveth the Lord with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' I do not deny, but there are a great many professors of religion amongst us, who would fain be accounted more strict and holy than their neighbours are, so as to be reckoned the religious; as the friars and nuns are in the church of Rome: but are they therefore to be esteemed the elect and chosen of God, because they fancy themselves to be so? Or rather is not their pride and self-conceitedness an argument that they are not so? Blessed be God for it, I have no spleen nor rancour against any of them, but heartily wish they were as truly good and holy as they would seem to be. But what? Is not pride a sin? Is

not self-conceitedness a sin? Is not irreverence in God's worship a sin? Is not disobedience to magistrates a sin? Is not uncharitableness or censoriousness a sin? Certainly all these will be found to be sins another day. And therefore whatsoever pretences men may make unto religion, if they allow themselves in such sins as these, they are as far from being in the number of the chosen, as the most dissolute and scandalous person in the world. But when these two are removed from the number of the called, how few of them will appear to be chosen.

5. Yet once again. Take out all such as believe not in our Lord Jesus Christ, but being morally honest and faithful in performing their duty to God and man, trust more in their own good works than to his merit and mediation. For that all such are to be excluded is plain from the whole tenor of the gospel, which assures us, that there is no salvation to be had but only by Jesus Christ; nor by him neither, but only by believing in him. But if Christ should come this day to judgment, would he find faith upon earth? Verily, I fear, he would find but very little, if any at all, amongst us: he might, I believe, find some pretty strict and circumspect in obeying of his other laws, or at least in endeavouring to do so. But for a man to do all that is required of him, and yet to count himself an unprofitable servant; for a man to do all he can, and yet rest upon nothing that he hath done, but to depend wholly upon another, even upon Jesus Christ for life and happiness, this is hard indeed to flesh and blood, and as rare to find as it is to find a rose among the weeds and thistles

of a barren wilderness, or a diamond amongst the gravel upon the sea-shore; here and there I believe there may be found one, but so rarely, that they can scarce be termed any, be sure but very few in comparison of the many who are called.

Now, let us put these things together, and we shall easily grant that this saying of our Saviour was but too true, that 'many are called, but few chosen.' And to bring it closer to ourselves, we are all called to repent, and believe the gospel: now take out from amongst us all ignorant persons that have heard indeed, but understand not what they hear; all atheistical persons, that believe not really there is a God to judge them; all debauched sinners that live in open and notorious crimes; all pharisaical hypocrites that avoid open, but indulge themselves in secret sins, that have 'the form, but not the power of godliness;' and all such who are as St. Paul was before his conversion, 'as touching the righteousness of the law blameless,' but yet believe not in Jesus Christ. Take out, I say, all such persons as I have named from amongst us, and what a small number proportionably should we have left behind! how many would be excluded the presence of God! how few would continue in it! What cause should we then have to say with our Saviour, 'that many are called, but few chosen.'

Having thus explained the meaning, and confirmed the truth of this proposition, that many are called, but few chosen, we must consider the reasons of it, how it comes to pass that of the many which are called there are but few chosen: a thing

which I confess we have all just cause to wonder and admire at: are not all men rational creatures? Are they not able to distinguish betwixt good and evil? Do not they understand their own interest? What then should be the reason that so many of them should be called and invited to the chiefest good, the highest happiness their natures are capable of, yet so few of them should mind or prosecute it, so as to be chosen or admitted into the participation of it? What shall we ascribe it to, the will and pleasure of almighty God, as if he delighted in the ruin of his creatures, and therefore although he calls them, he would not have them to come unto him? No, that cannot be; for in his revealed will, which is the only rule that we are to walk by, he hath told us the contrary in plain terms, and hath confirmed it too with an oath, saying, ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his way and live.’¹ And elsewhere he assures us, that he would ‘have all men saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.’² And therefore if we believe what God saith, nay, if we believe what he hath sworn, we must needs acknowledge that it is his will and pleasure, that as many as are called, should be all chosen and saved. And indeed, if he had no mind that we should come when we are called to him, why should he call us to come? Why hath he given us his word, his ministers, his ordinances, and all to invite and oblige us to repent and turn to him, if after all he was resolved not to accept of us, nor would have us

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

come at all? Far be it from us that we should ever have such hard and unworthy thoughts of the great Creator and governor of the world, especially considering that he hath told us the contrary, as plainly as it was possible for him to express his mind to us. I do not deny, but that according to the apostle, 'known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;'¹ and there are several passages in Scripture which intimate unto us God's eternal election of all that are truly pious, to live with him for ever. But it is not for us to be so bold and impudent, as to pry into the secrets of God, nor so curious as to search into his eternal and incomprehensible decrees; but we must still remember the words of Moses, 'that secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, that we may do all the words of this law.'² Whatsoever is necessary for us to believe or do, in order to our eternal salvation, is clearly revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, and therefore what we there read belongs unto us to know, neither are we to look any further than to his revealed will. But God in the Scriptures, doth plainly tell us, not only in the places before quoted, but elsewhere, that he is, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'³ This is the revealed will of God, which we are to acquiesce in, and rest fully satisfied with, so as to act accordingly, without concerning ourselves about things that are too high for us, and no way belong unto us. And therefore it is not his secret, but revealed

¹ Acts, xv. 18.² Deut. xxix. 29.³ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

will, that we are to search for the reasons of this proposition, that 'many are called, but few chosen.'

Now, consulting the word of God to find out the reasons of this so strange assertion, that many are called, and few chosen, I know no better or fitter place to search for them than this parable, which gave our blessed Saviour the occasion of asserting it; in which it is very observable that he meddles not at all with any reasons *a priori*, deduced from the eternal decrees of his Father, but he only suggests to us the reasons *a posteriori*, drawn from the disposition and carriage of men, why so many are called, and yet so few chosen.

For the opening whereof we must know that the end and intent of this parable, was only to show the entertainment which his gospel had then, and should still meet with in the world; many refusing to embrace it at all, and of those who embrace it, many still walking unworthy of it. So that the issue and consequence of it will be, that though many be called to it, there are but few chosen. And he hath so worded the parable that we need not seek any further for the reasons of this conclusion from it, they being almost clearly couched in the parable itself; which, that we may the better understand, I shall open and explain them particularly, so as to make them intelligible, I hope, to the meanest capacity.

I. The first reason therefore why so many are called, but so few chosen, is because they who are called to Christ, will not come unto him; for this is the first reason which our Saviour himself in the parable assigns for it: 'The king,' saith he, 'sent his servants to call them that were bidden to the

marriage, and they would not come.’¹ ‘And they would not come;’ so that the great fault is still in the wills of men, which are generally so depraved and corrupt, that though they be called never so oft, and cannot but in reason acknowledge that it is their interest to come, yet they have so strange an aversion to the holiness and purity of the gospel which they are called to, that they will not come unto it, only because they will not; for here, they who are first bidden, give no reason for their refusal, only it is said, they would not come. And good cause why, for when we have searched into all the reasons imaginable, why men do not fully submit themselves to the obedience of the gospel, they will all resolve and empty themselves into this, that they will not because they will not. Let ministers say what they can, let the Scripture say what it will, let God himself say what he pleases, yet sinners men are, and sinners they will be, in spite of them all; as the prophet rebuking the people for their sins, said, ‘But thou saidst, there is no hope; no, for I loved strangers, and after them will I go.’² And so it is to this day; we tell them of their sins, and the dangerous consequences of them; we tell them that they must not love the world, but seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place; we tell them from Christ’s own mouth, that except they repent and forsake their sins, they must perish; but they say in effect, that we had as good hold our tongues; for they have loved the world, and after it they will go, they have found pleasure in the commission

¹ Matt. xxii. 3.² Jer. ii. 25.

of their sins, and therefore they will commit them ; Christ calls them to come unto him, and they know no reason why they should not, but howsoever they will not come : if we were but once willing, the work was done ; for what our wills are really inclined to, we cannot but use the utmost of our endeavour to attain. But the mischief is, men read the gospel, they hear Christ calling upon them to believe and obey it, but their wills are still averse from it, there is a kind of antipathy and contrariety within them, against such exact and real holiness, as the gospel requires of them. So that if they perish, they must blame themselves for it, it is their own choice they choose and prefer their sins, with all the miseries that attend them, before the gospel of Christ, with all the glory and happiness which is offered in it ; and therefore, as God said to his people, ‘ Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? ’¹ So say I to these men, repent and believe the gospel, for why will ye die, why will ye perish eternally ? Have you any reason for it ? None in the world but your own wills. Christ hath told you in plain terms, ‘ Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out ; ’² but if you will not come unto him, who can help that ? Are not yourselves only in the fault ? Will not your blood be upon your own heads ? What could Christ have done more for you than he hath done ? What could he have suffered more for you than he hath suffered ? How could he call you to him more plainly and pathetically than he doth ? But if after all this, you will not come unto him, you must even thank yourselves for all the torments

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

² John, vi. 37.

you must ere long suffer and undergo. And this is, indeed, the case of the greatest part of mankind, that though they be called and invited to partake of all the merits of Christ's death and passion, yet they will not come unto him. And this is the first and great reason why so many are called, and yet so few chosen.¹

II. The second reason is, because men do not really believe that they are invited to such glorious things as indeed they are, as our Saviour himself intimates in the parable. For when they who were bidden would not come upon the first invitation, as not believing the message that those servants brought them, the king sent forth other servants, saying, 'Tell them which are bidden, behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage.'² When the first servants were not believed, he sent others with fuller instructions, giving them orders to acquaint the guests, that all things were now ready, and to assure them that it was to a marriage-feast they were invited. But it seems, whatsoever the first or second servants could say, it was to no purpose, they would not believe them, and therefore sent them away as they came; whereby our Saviour exactly discovers to us the entertainment that his gospel always did, and still would meet with in the world. Before his own coming into the world, he sent his prophets to invite mankind to accept of the terms propounded in it, and to call upon them to repent and turn to God, that their sins might be blotted out, and their souls admitted into the grace and favour of almighty God,

¹ John, v. 40.

² Matt. xxii. 4.

and so partake of eternal glory, which the prophets call men to, under the notion of a feast; 'Feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,'¹ which they called all men to, saying, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'² But how their message was received the same prophet declares, saying, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'³ and so is it since. For when the prophets could not be credited, God afterwards sent his apostles, and still to this day is sending servant after servant to invite men to grace and pardon, to heaven and eternal happiness. But we, his ministers, may still say with the prophet, 'Who hath believed our report?' We tell men, that unless they repent and turn to God, iniquity will be their ruin; we tell them also, that if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved, and if they be holy here, they shall be happy hereafter. But what signifies our telling them of these things, if they believe not what we say? And yet who doth? Men give us the hearing, censure what they have heard, and that is all the use they make of it, never really or firmly believing any one truth that we make known or expound unto them; and this being the case not only of some few, but of the greatest part of mankind; hence, it comes to pass, that so many are called and so few chosen; even because they who are called do not believe it, and so it is all one with them whether they be called or not. Be sure God chooseth none but such as believe the word he sends unto them; for as the

¹ Isaiah, xxv. 6.² Ibid. lv. 1.³ Ibid. liii. 1.

apostle saith, 'God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith.'¹ If they be not rich in faith, they are not for his purpose; and seeing there are but few that are so, hence of the many which are called, there are 'but few chosen.'

III. Another reason why of the many which are called there are so few chosen, is because they have no real esteem or value for the things which they are called to; as it is in the parable, when the servants were sent to call upon them to make haste to the feast, because all things were ready, it is said that they made light of it.² They did not think it worth their while to go, though it was to a feast, a marriage-feast, yea to the marriage-feast of so great a person as the king's son: no, not though they were invited by the king himself unto it. Thus it was in ancient time, and thus it is still; the King of heaven sends to invite men to his court, to lay aside their filthy garments, and to put on the robes that he hath prepared for them, that they be holy as he is holy, and so live with him and be happy for ever. But they make light of such things as these, they can see no such beauty in Christ, why they should desire him; no such excellency in God himself, why they should be in love with him; and as for heaven, they never were there yet, and therefore care not whether they ever come there or not; though they be called, they matter not whether they be chosen to it or not; and hence likewise it is that of the many which are called, there are but few chosen.

IV. Another reason is, because they who are called are generally addicted to the things of this

¹ James, ii. 5.

² Matt. xxii. 5.

life, they have the serpent's curse upon them, to feed upon the dust of the earth, and therefore slight all the overtures that are made them of heaven and eternal happiness. As our Saviour himself intimates in this parable, saying, that 'when they were invited, they made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.'¹ Thus we read of the Pharisees, that they being covetous, when they heard the words of Christ, they derided them.² And thus it is to this day; though men be called to Christ, they are so much taken up with worldly businesses that they can find no time to come unto him; but away they go again, one to his trade, another to his merchandise. These are the things that most men's minds are wholly bent upon, and therefore they will not be persuaded to leave them to go to Christ.

It is true, if he called them to great estates, if he called them to a good bargain, if he called them to crowns and sceptres in this world, then they would all strive which should be chosen first: but the things that he calls us to are quite of another nature; he calls us to repent of our sins, to believe in him, to condemn the world, to have our conversations in heaven. But these are things which men do not love to hear of, as being contrary to their earthly temper and inclinations; and therefore, we who are God's ministers may call our hearts out before they will set themselves in good earnest to mind them. Or to bring it home still closer to us, how often have we all been invited to that spiritual feast, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but how few are there that come unto it, when the

¹ Matthew, xxii. 5.

² Luke, xvi. 14.

whole congregation is called to partake of it? scarce one in twenty think it worth their while to stay to have their share in it. What can be the reason of this, but that our minds are taken up with other things, which we fancy to be of far greater concernment to us than all the merits of Christ's death and passion? and therefore, it is no wonder that so many of us are called, and so few chosen, seeing we ourselves choose the toys and trifles of this transient world, before all those real joys which in the gospel we are called and invited to.

V. In the next place, many of them which are called, have so strange an antipathy to God and goodness, that they do not only slight their heavenly, in comparison of their earthly calling; but they hate and abuse such as are sent to call them, as our Saviour himself intimates.¹ O barbarous cruelty; what hurt, what injury is done unto them? They are invited to a feast, and for this they are angry, and kill the messengers which are sent to invite them. Thus it hath been in all ages. This was the entertainment, this the requital that most of the prophets received for the divine message they brought to mankind.² Yea, Christ himself, the Son and heir of God, was put to death for inviting men to life and happiness, and so were his apostles too: and so it is to this day. There is still a secret malice and hatred in men's hearts against such as endeavour to preach the gospel clearly and fully to them. We tell them of their sins, we acquaint them of the danger they are in, we call upon them to forsake and avoid them, we

¹ Luke, xx. 9.

² Matt, xxiii. 35.

invite them to Christ, and so to heaven and eternal happiness; for this, many of them are angry with us, and incensed against us. They may forgive us this wrong, I can assure them we intend them no evil, but all the good we can do or desire to our own souls; that whatsoever the success be, it is still our duty to call upon them, to advise them of their duty, and if possible to reclaim them from their sins; and if they be angry with us for that, as many are, they cannot wonder at our Saviour's saying, that 'many are called, and few chosen.'

VI. The last reason which our Saviour gives in this parable, why 'many are called, but few chosen,' is because of those who are called, and come too at their call, many come not aright; which he signifies by the man that came without his wedding-garment,¹ where, although he mentions but one man, yet under that one is comprehended all of the same kind, even all such persons as have the gospel preached to them, and so are called and invited to all the graces and privileges proposed in it, all such as profess to believe in Christ, and to expect happiness and salvation from him, yet will not come up to the terms which he propounds in his gospel to them, even to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called.'² And indeed this is the great reason of all, why of so many which are called there are so few chosen, because there are so few which do all things which the gospel requires of them. Many like Herod will do many things,³ and are almost persuaded to be Christians, as Agrippa was.⁴ How zealous are

¹ Matt. xxii. 11, 12, 13.

³ Mark, vi. 20.

² Eph. iv. 1.

⁴ Acts, xxv. 28.

some for, how violently are others against, the little ceremonies and circumstances of religion, and in the meanwhile neglect and let slip the power and substance of it? How demure are some in their carriage towards men, but irreverent and slovenly in the worship of almighty God? How devout would others seem towards God, but are still careless and negligent of their duty towards men? Some are all for the duties of the first table without the second, others for the second without the first. Some are altogether for obedience and good works, without faith in Christ; others are as much for faith in Christ, without obedience and good works. Some would do all themselves, as if Christ had done nothing for them; others fancy that Christ hath so done all things for them, that there is nothing left for themselves to do; and so betwixt both these sorts of people, which are the far greater part of those who are called, either the merits, or else the laws of Christ are slighted and contemned. But is this the way to be saved? No, surely: if I know any thing of the gospel, it requires both repentance and faith in Christ, that we perform sincere obedience to all his laws, and yet trust in him, and him alone, for pardon, acceptance, and salvation. And whosoever comes short of this, though he be called, we may be sure he is not chosen, though he come to the marriage-feast with those that are invited, yet wanting this wedding-garment, he will be cast out again with shame and confusion of face. So that it is not our doing some, or many, or most of the things which the gospel requires, that will do our business, unless we do all to the utmost of our skill and power. But where shall we find the man that doth so? What ground

have we but to acknowledge that our Saviour had too much cause to say, 'Many are called, but few chosen;' which I fear is but too true, not only of others, but ourselves too.

I say not this to discourage any one: no, it is my hearty desire and prayer to the eternal God, that every soul of us might be chosen and saved. But my great fear is, that many think it so easy a matter to go to heaven, that if they do but say their prayers, and hear sermons now and then, they cannot miss of it, and therefore need not trouble themselves any further about it. But they must give me leave to tell them, that this will not serve their turn; if it would, most of those which are called would be chosen too. Whereas our Saviour himself, tells us, in plain terms, the contrary. And yet this should be so far from discouraging of us, that it should rather excite us to greater diligence about it than heretofore we may have used, as our Saviour himself intimates in his answer to this question.¹ And verily, what greater encouragement can we have, than to consider, that though there be but few chosen, yet there are some? For why may not you and I be in the number of those few as well as others? Are we not all called to Christ? Are not we all invited, yea, commanded to believe in his name, and obey his gospel, that so we may partake of everlasting glory? Let us then all set about that work in good earnest, which we are called to. Let us but fear God, and keep his commandments, and but believe in his Son for his acceptance of us; and then we need not fear, for though of the many others which are called,

¹ Luke, xiii. 23, 24.

there are but few chosen ; yet we few who are called shall be all chosen ; chosen to live with God himself, and Jesus Christ, and to sing forth his praises for evermore.

THOUGHTS UPON THE APPEARANCE OF
CHRIST THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
OR
THE BEATIFIC VISION.

So long as we are in the body, we are apt to be governed wholly by its senses, seldom or never minding any thing but what comes to us through one or other of them. Though we are all able to abstract our thoughts when we please from matter, and fix them upon things that are purely spiritual, there are but few that ever do it. But few, even among those also who have such things revealed to them by God himself, and so have infinitely more and firmer ground to believe them, than any one, or all their senses put together can afford. Such are the great truths of the gospel, for which we have the infallible word and testimony of the supreme truth ; yet seeing they are not the objects of sense, but only of our faith, though we profess to believe them, yet we take but little notice of them, and are usually no more affected with them, than as if there were no such thing in being. Hence it hath pleased God, in great compassion to our

infirmity, not only to reveal and make known such spiritual things to us, in plain and easy terms, but likewise to bring them as near as possible to our senses, by representing them to us under the names and characters of such sensible objects as bear the greatest resemblance to them ; that we, who are led so much by our senses, may by them also be directed how to apprehend those spiritual objects which he hath told us of, on purpose that we may believe them upon his word.

Thus he often useth the words, hand, eye, and the like ; to signify his own divine perfections to us. And thus it was that our Saviour preached the gospel to the people, by parables and similitudes of things commonly seen and done among themselves. The prophets also frequently took the same course, as might be shown by many instances ; but one of the most remarkable is that in Mal. iv. 2, where the prophet in the name of God speaking of Christ's coming into the world, expresses it by the rising of the sun, saying, 'To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.'

For that Jesus Christ is that Sun of righteousness here spoken of, is so plain from the context, and the whole design of the prophet, that I need not insist upon the proving of it ; but shall only observe that this being the last of all the prophets in the Old Testament, he shuts up his own and all the other prophecies with a clear prediction of Christ, and his forerunner John the Baptist, whom he calls Elijah, or Elias, and concludes his prophecy with these words concerning him, 'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth (or rather the land) with a curse.'¹ For that by Elijah is here meant John the Baptist, we are assured by Christ himself.² And it is very observable, that as this prophet ends the Old Testament with a prediction of Elias, so St. Luke begins the new with a relation how John the Baptist was born, and so came into the world a little before Christ, as the morning-star that appeared before the rising of the Sun of righteousness.

But of the day which shall come at the ^{down} that glorious Sun, the prophet saith, that ^{at} they burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, ^{and joy} that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.³ It will be a terrible day to those that shall obstinately refuse to walk in the light of it; they shall be all consumed, as we read the unbelieving Jews were at the destruction of Jerusalem, that happened soon after that sun was up. But then turning himself, as it were, to his own people, almighty God, here by his prophet, cheers and comforts them, saying to them, 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings,' &c. He shall arise to all, but to the other with such a scorching heat as shall burn them up, to these with healing in his wings, or rays, so as not to hurt, but heal them of all their maladies.

Now, that which I chiefly design, by God's

¹ Mal. iv. 5, 6.

² Matt. xi. 14.

³ Mal. iv. 1.

assistance, to show from these words, is, what thoughts they suggest to us concerning our blessed Saviour, by calling him 'the Sun of righteousness.' But to make the way as plain as I can, we must first consider to whom he is here said to 'arise with healing in his wings,' even to those that fear the name of God; i. e. to those who firmly believing in God, and being fully persuaded of his infinite power, justice, and mercy, and also of the truth of all his threats and promises, stand continually in awe of him, not daring to do any thing willingly that may offend him, nor leave any thing of all that he would have them do. Such, and have¹ly, can be truly said to fear God. And therefore the fear of God in the Scriptures, especially of the Old Testament, is all along put for the whole duty of man. There being no duty that a man owes, either to God or his neighbour, but if he really fears God, he will endeavour all he can to do it. But this necessarily supposes his belief in God, and his holy word, or rather proceeds originally from it. 'For, he that cometh unto God,' so as to fear and obey him, 'must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.'¹ So that, as no man can believe in God, but he must needs fear him; so no man can fear God, unless he first believes in him. From whence it necessarily follows, that by those who are here said to fear the name of God, we can understand no other but only such as are possessed with a firm belief in him, and with a full persuasion of the truth and certainty of those divine revelations that he

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

hath made of himself, and of his will to mankind, and therefore live accordingly.

Of these, and these only, it is here said, that to them 'shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' Not to any other; no other being able to see his light, nor capable of those healing influences that proceed from him. For though he be a sun, he is not such a sun as we see with our bodily eyes in the firmament, but 'the sun of righteousness,' shining in the highest heavens, beyond the reach of our senses, visible only to the eye of faith, the evidence of things not seen. In-somuch, that although he be risen, and darts down his beams to this lower world continually, yet they who have not faith, can neither see him, nor enjoy any more benefit by him, than as if he was not risen, or did not shine at all. As if a man be born stark blind, though the sun shine never so clear about him, he sees no more than he did before, but lives in the dark at noon-day as much as at mid-night; neither can ye ever make him understand what light or colours are; for having not that sense, by which alone such things can be perceived, he can never understand what you mean by such things, so as to form any true notion of them in his mind: so it is in our present case; though the Sun of righteousness be risen, and shines most gloriously in the world, yet being the object only of our faith, without that a man can discern nothing of him. He may perhaps talk of light, but all the while he knows not what he means by the words he useth about it. For he useth them only as words in course, taken up from those he talks with, without having any effect or operation at all upon his

mind; whereas they who really believe God's word, and what is there revealed concerning the Sun of righteousness, see his light, feel his heat, experience the power and efficacy of his influences; and therefore, although they who have no faith (as few have) can be no way profited by what they shall hear or read of him, yet they who have, and act it out of what they hear or read out of God's holy word concerning him, they will find their thoughts and apprehensions of him cleared up, and their affections inflamed to him; so as to love and honour him for the future, as the fountain of all that spiritual life, and light, and joy they have: 'For to them he will arise with healing in his wings.'

He did not only arise once, but he continually ariseth to those who believe in God, and fear him. For thus saith the Lord, 'to you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' It is true, he speaks more especially of his incarnation, or visible appearance in the world; but, by this manner of speaking, he intimates withal that this Sun of righteousness is always shining upon his faithful people more or less, in all ages from the beginning to the end of this world. For in that it is said, 'he shall arise,' it is plainly supposed that he was the Sun of righteousness before, and gave light unto the world, though not so clearly as when he was actually arisen. As we see and enjoy the light of the sun, long before he riseth, from the first dawning of the day, though it grows clearer and clearer, all along as he comes nearer and nearer to his rising: so the Sun of righteousness began to enlighten the world as soon as it was darkened by sin; the day then began to

break, and it grew lighter and lighter in every age. Adam himself saw something of this light, Abraham more; 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day,' saith this glorious Sun, 'he saw it and was glad.'¹ David and the prophets after him saw it most clearly, especially this, the last of the prophets; he saw this Sun in a manner rising, so that he could tell the people that it would suddenly get above their horizon. 'The Lord whom ye seek,' saith he, 'shall suddenly come to his temple,'² and acquaints them also with the happy influences it would have upon them, saying, in the name of God, 'Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.'

'The Sun of righteousness;' that is, as I observed before, 'Jesus Christ the righteous,' who is often foretold and spoken of under the name and notion of the sun or star that giveth light unto the world: 'There shall come a star out of Jacob,' said Balaam.³ 'And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth,'⁴ saith David. And the prophet Isaiah speaking of his coming, saith, 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.'⁵ For that this was spoken of Christ, we have the authority of the evangelists.⁶ To the same purpose, is that of the same prophet, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.'⁷ 'The sun shall be no

¹ John, viii. 56.² Mal. iii. 1.³ Numb xxiv. 17.⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.⁵ Isaiah, ix. 2.⁶ Matt. iv. 16.⁷ Isaiah, lx. 1, 2.

more the light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.’¹ To which we may add the many places where Christ is called Nazareth, which we translate *the branch*, as, ‘I will bring forth my servant the branch.’ ‘Behold the man whose name is the branch.’² ‘I will raise up to David a righteous branch.’ ‘And a branch of righteousness.’³ In all which places the original word signifies also, ‘the rising of the sun,’ and is accordingly rendered by the Seventy *Ἀνατολή*, *Oriens*, not that part of heaven where the sun riseth, but the sun itself as rising there. And so it is translated also both in the Syriac and Arabic versions. And where it is said, ‘In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful,’⁴ in the Seventy it is ἐπιλάμψει ὁ Θεός, ‘God shall shine forth.’ In the Syriac, ‘The rising of the Lord shall be for glory.’ In Arabic, ‘The Lord shall rise as the sun.’ And that this is the true sense of the word in all these places, appears from the prophecy of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist; for, speaking of Christ’s coming, he expresses it according to our translation, by saying, ‘The day-spring from on high hath visited us.’⁵ But in the original it is the same word that the Seventy use in all the afore-said places, *Ἀνατολή*, *Oriens*, ‘the rising sun.’ And it is much to be observed, that all the said places of the prophets are interpreted of the Messiah or Christ, by the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase made by the ancient Jews themselves; for מָנָח, ‘the

¹ Isaiah, lx. 19.² Zech. iii 8; vi. 12.³ Jer xxiii. 5.⁴ Isaiah, iv. 2.⁵ Luke, i. 78

rising sun,' is there translated משיחא, 'the Christ,' as if it was only another name for the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. From all which it appears, that when the prophet here calls our Saviour Christ, the Sun of righteousness, he speaks according to the common sense and practice of the church.

And verily he may well be called the Sun, both in respect of what he is in himself, and in respect of what he is to us. As there is but one sun in the firmament, it is the chief of all creatures that we see in the world. There is nothing upon earth, but what is vastly inferior, the very stars of heaven seem no way comparable to it. It is the top, the head, the glory of all visible objects: in like manner, there is but one Saviour in the world, he is exalted far above all things in it, not only above the sun itself, but above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. 'All things are put under his feet, and he is given to be head over all things to the church.'¹ The very angels, authorities, and powers of heaven, 'are all made subject to him.'² And that is the reason that he is said to be at the right hand of God, because he is preferred before, and set over the whole creation, next to the almighty Creator himself, where he now reigns, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth.

And as the sun is in itself also the most glorious, as well as the most excellent creature we see, of such transcendant beauty, splendour and glory, that we cannot look steadfastly upon it, but our eyes are presently dazzled: so is Christ 'the Sun

¹ Eph. i. 21, 22.

² 1 Peter, iii. 22.

of righteousness :’ when he was transfigured, ‘ his face did shine as the sun.’¹ When St. John had a glimpse of him ‘ he saw his countenance as the sun that shineth in his strength.’² When he appeared to St. Paul going to Damascus at mid-day, ‘ there was a light above the brightness of the sun shining round about him, and them that journeyed with him.’³ And it is no wonder, ‘ for he is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.’⁴ And therefore must needs shine more gloriously than it is possible for any mere creature to do ; his very body, by reason of its union to the divine person, ‘ is a glorious body.’⁵ The most glorious, doubtless, of all the bodies in the world, as far exceeding the sun, as that doth a clod of earth ; insomuch, that could we look upon our Lord as he now shines forth in all his glory in the highest heavens, how would our eyes be dazzled ? Our whole souls amazed and confounded at his excellent glory ? the sun would appear to us no otherwise than as the moon and stars do, when the sun is up. And he that so far excels the sun in that very property, wherein the sun excels all other things, may well be called the Sun : the Sun by way of pre-eminence, the most glorious Sun in the world, in comparison whereof nothing else deserves to be called by that name. Neither may our blessed Saviour be justly called by this glorious name only for what he is in himself, but likewise from what he doth for us ; as may be easily demonstrated from all the benefits that we receive

¹ Matt. xvii. 2.² Rev. i. 16.³ Acts, xxvi. 13.⁴ Heb. i. 3.⁵ Phil. iii. 21.

from the sun. I shall instance in some of the most plain and obvious.

First, Therefore, the sun we know is the fountain of all the light that we have upon earth, without which we could see nothing, not so much as the way that is before us, but should always be groping and stumbling in the dark; whereas by it we can discern every thing that is about us, or at any distance from us, as far as our sight can reach. In which respect our blessed Lord is the Sun indeed; 'the light of the world;'¹ 'the true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world;'² 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel;'³ 'a marvellous light,'⁴ whereby we can see things that are not visible to the eye, as plainly as we do those that are. For this 'Day-spring from on high,' this Sun of righteousness hath visited us, 'to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace;'⁵ to show us the invisible things of God, and direct us to all things belonging to our everlasting peace and happiness. He hath made them all clear and manifest to us in his gospel: 'but whatsoever maketh manifest is light;'⁶ wherefore he is said to have 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,'⁷ because he hath there so clearly revealed them to us, that by the light of his holy gospel we may see all things necessary to be known, believed, or done, in order to eternal life, as plainly as we can see the most visible objects at noon-day.

¹ John, viii. 12. ² Ib. i. 9. ³ Luke, ii. 32. ⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 9.
⁵ Luke, i. 78, 79. ⁶ Eph. v. 13. ⁷ 2 Tim. i. 10.

By this light we can see as much of the glory of God himself, as our mortal nature can bear. For, 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;' ¹ 'Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' ² So that no man ever had or can have any right knowledge of the true God, but only by his Son our Saviour Christ. But by this means they that lived before might see him as by twilight; we who live after this Sun is risen, may see him by the clearest light that can be given of him; for he hath fully revealed and declared himself to us in the gospel.

By this glorious light, we can see into the mystery of the eternal Trinity in unity, so as to believe that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one, one Jehovah, one God. That God the Father made all things at first by his word, and still upholds and orders all things according to his will: that God the Son was made flesh, became man, and as such died upon the cross, and so offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; that he arose again, went up to heaven, and is now there at the right hand of God: that upon our repentance and faith in him our sins are pardoned, and he that made us is reconciled to us by the merits of his said death; that by the power of his intercession which he now makes in heaven for us, we are justified or accounted righteous in him, before him, and in him our almighty Father; that God the Holy Ghost abides continually with his church, moving upon, actuating and influencing the means

¹ John, i. 18.

² Matt. xi. 27.

of grace that are there administered ; that he sanctifies all that believe in Christ, leads them into all truth, comforts them in all their troubles, and assists them in doing whatsoever is required of them. These and many such great and necessary truths, as lay in a great measure hid before, are now, by the light of the Sun of righteousness shining in his gospel, made so plain and evident, that all may see them, except they wilfully shut their eyes, or turn their backs upon them.

And though the sun in the firmament enlightens only the air, to make it a fit medium through which to see ; this glorious light that comes from the Sun of righteousness, enlightening men's minds too, opens their eyes 'to behold the wondrous things that are revealed in the law of God.'¹ And that too so effectually in some, that they likewise are able to enlighten others, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light.² Insomuch that they are also the light of the world.³ Not originally in themselves, but by communication from him, as the moon is first enlightened by the sun, and then reflects its light to the earth.

Moreover, the sun is the first cause under God, not only of light, but also of all the life that is in any creature upon earth, without which nothing could live, no, not so much as a vegetable, much less an animal ; for that which we call life, where-with such creatures as have organs fitted for it, are actuated and quickened, so as to be said properly to live, all depends upon the heat and influence of the sun. Should the sun once cease to be, or to influence the world, all living creatures would

¹ Psal. cxix. 18.

² Acts, xxvi. 18.

³ Matt. v. 14.

immediately expire and die. So is Christ the Sun of righteousness, the fountain of all spiritual life. 'In thee,' saith David, 'is the fountain of life, in thy light shall we see light;'¹ where we see that light and life in this sense also go together—they both proceed from the same fountain, 'the Sun of righteousness;' who therefore saith, 'I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'² That light which hath life always proceeding from it, and accompanying it; so that he is both life and light itself. 'I am,' saith he, 'the way, the truth, and the life.'³ And our life, as the apostle calls him.⁴ Even the life of all that believe in him. 'The life that I now live in the flesh,' saith the same apostle, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God.'⁵ 'And therefore he who believeth, and so hath the Son, he hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.'⁶

From all which it appears, that all men by nature are 'dead in trespasses and sins.'⁷ 'But when any arise from the dead by faith, it is Christ that gives them life';⁸ 'who came into the world on purpose that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'⁹ More abundantly, that is, in the highest and most excellent manner that it is possible for men to live; for this life which the Sun of righteousness raises believers to, is the life of righteousness, an holy, an heavenly, a spiritual, divine life; it is the life of faith, whereby they live to other purposes, and in a quite different manner from other men. They live to God,

¹ Psal. xxxvi. 9.² John, viii. 12.³ John, xiv. 6.⁴ Col. iii. 4.⁵ Gal. ii. 20.⁶ John, v. 24.⁷ Eph. ii. 1.⁸ Eph. v. 14.⁹ John, x. 10.

and not unto the world ; they live in a constant dependence upon him, and submission to him ; they live with a firm belief of his word, and sincere obedience to his laws ; they live altogether in his service, so that ‘whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they still do it to the glory of God.’¹ In short, they strive all they can to do the will of God upon earth, as the holy angels do it in heaven, and so have their conversation there, where their Saviour and their treasure is.

But this life is infused into them, only by the rays of the Sun of righteousness, by the Holy Spirit which proceedeth from Christ, whereby they being born again, and made the children of light, thus walk in newness of life ; and so it is nourished also, preserved and strengthened only by him, who therefore calls himself ‘the bread of life,’ and ‘the bread of God, which cometh from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,’ ‘the living bread, of which if any man eateth, he shall live for ever.’ And this bread which he gives is his flesh, ‘which he gave for the life of the world ;’ ‘for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed ; so that whoso eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood, hath eternal life, and he will raise him up at the last day, that he may live for ever.’² ‘For Christ is the resurrection and the life ; whosoever believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.’³ Though his body may die, yet not his soul : and his body also at the last day shall be raised again to life, by the power of this glorious Sun :

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

² John, vi. 35—58.

³ John, xi. 25, 26.

‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’¹

Seeing therefore that Jesus Christ is the fountain of the life of righteousness, the author of that spiritual and eternal life which the righteous live, as the sun is of our natural, he also may most properly be called the Sun of righteousness, as he is in the words before us. And so he may be likewise from his cheering and refreshing our spirits in the inward man as the Sun does in the outward. ‘The light of the eyes,’ saith the wise man, ‘rejoiceth the heart.’² ‘And truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.’³ This we all find by daily experience, and so do we too, that the light and heat of the sun agitate or move our animal spirits in so benign and delicate a manner, that we are always more cheerful and pleasant when the sun shines clearly than we are in a dark night or cloudy day. But in this the Sun of righteousness infinitely exceeds the other, for he is the fountain not only of some, but of all the true joy and comfort that his people have, or ever can have in the world. It all proceeds from him, whom having not seen they love, in whom, though now they see him not, ‘yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.’⁴ For upon their believing in him, as having been delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification, he manifesteth himself and his special love and favour to them, in the pardon of their sins, and their reconciliation to almighty God, whereby their souls are filled, not only with un-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

² Eccl. xi. 7.

³ Prov. xv. 30.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 8.

speokable but glorious joy, of the same nature of that which the saints in heaven are continually transported with. This is that which is called the lifting up the light of God's countenance, and his causing his face to shine upon them.¹ When the Sun of righteousness thus shineth upon them, refreshing and comforting their hearts, by the sweet influences of that Holy Spirit that proceedeth from him.

But the sun doth not only refresh the earth, but makes it fruitful; it is by this means, under God, that plants grow and bring forth fruit, and that animals do the respective works which God hath set them. So is Christ the cause or author of all the good and righteous works that are done in the world; he himself saith, 'Without me ye can do nothing;'² and his apostle could say upon his own experience, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.'³ And that the fruits, all the fruits of righteousness, are by Jesus Christ, or come from him.⁴ Who therefore in this respect also may well be termed 'the Sun of righteousness.'

To which we may likewise add, that as the works which God hath made upon earth by his power, although they have no light in themselves whereby they can be seen, yet they appear in all their beauty and colours by the sun reflecting his light upon them; so the works which his servants do by his assistance and grace, although they have no real worth, nor are exactly righteous in themselves, yet by the Sun of righteousness reflecting his righteousness upon them, they seem or are ac-

¹ Psal. iv. 6; lxvii. 1; lxxx. 3. Numb. vi. 25.

² John, xv. 5.

³ Phil. iv. 13.

⁴ Phil. i. 11.

counted righteous in the sight of God; or, as St. Peter speaks, 'they are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;'¹ without whom, therefore, there could be no such thing as righteousness seen upon earth, no more than there could be colours without light. But, 'as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;'² both sincerely righteous in themselves, and accepted of as righteous before God, by his righteousness imputed to them. So that all righteousness, both as it is performed by men, and as it is approved of by God, comes only from Jesus Christ. And this seems to be the great reason, wherefore he is here called in a peculiar manner the Sun of righteousness, and promised to arise to his people 'with healing in his wings,' that they may grow up as calves in the stall; to show that it is by him only that they are healed of their infirmities, and restored to a sound mind, so as to grow in grace and bring forth the fruits of righteousness, such righteousness as by him is acceptable to God, from whom they shall therefore at the last day receive the crown of righteousness, that crown which this Sun of righteousness hath procured for them.

Upon these, among many other accounts, Jesus Christ the Saviour of mankind may be truly called the Sun of righteousness, as he is here by the Spirit of truth itself, for our admonition and comfort. For hereby we are put in mind how to think of our blessed Saviour, and to exercise our faith in him, so as to love and honour him with all our hearts, and to put our whole trust and confidence in him

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

² Rom. v. 19.

for all things necessary to our eternal salvation. Forasmuch as we are by this means given to understand, that what the sun is to this lower world, the same is Christ to his church. But the sun, as we have heard, is the most excellent, and most glorious thing that we see in the world. It is the next cause, under God, of all the light that is in the air, and of all the life that any creatures live upon the earth. It is that which refresheth the earth, and makes it fruitful. It is that also which gives a lustre to all things that are about us, so as to make them pleasing and delightful to the eye.

And accordingly, whensoever I think of my blessed Saviour, the Sun of righteousness, I apprehend, or rather by the eye of faith I behold him in the highest heavens, there shining in glory and splendour infinitely greater than any mortal eye can bear, invested with supreme majesty, honour, and authority over the whole creation. I behold him there surrounded with an innumerable company of holy angels, as so many fixed stars, and of glorified saints as planets enlightened by him; all his satellites or servants waiting upon him, ready upon all occasions to reflect and convey his benign influences or favour to his people upon earth. I see him yonder, by his own light, I behold him displaying his bright beams, and diffusing his light round about, over his whole church, both that which is triumphant in heaven, and that which is militant here on earth; that all the members of it may see all things belonging to their peace. I behold him continually sending down his quickening Spirit upon those who are baptized into, and believe in his holy name, to regenerate them, to be a standing principle of a new and divine life in

them. I behold him there manifesting himself, and causing his face to shine upon those who look up to him, so as to refresh and cheer their spirits, to make them brisk and lively, and able to run 'with patience the race that is set before them.' I behold him there continually issuing forth his Holy Spirit, to actuate and influence the administration of his word and sacraments; that all who duly receive them may thereby grow in grace, and be fruitful in every good word and work. I behold the Sun of righteousness shining with so much power and efficacy upon his church, that all the good works which are done in it, though imperfect in themselves, do notwithstanding appear through him as good and righteous in the sight of God himself, and are accordingly rewarded by him. In short, as the sun was made to govern the day, so I behold the Sun of righteousness as governing his church, and ordering all things both within and without it, so as to make them work together for the good of those who love God, till he hath brought them all to himself, to live with them in the highest heavens, where they also shall, by his means, 'shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father for ever.'¹

Could we keep these and such-like thoughts of our blessed Saviour always fresh in our minds, could we be always thus looking upon him, as the Sun of righteousness shining continually upon us and his whole church, what holy, what heavenly, what comfortable lives should we then lead? We should then despise the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, as nothing, as less than nothing, in

¹ Matt. xiii. 43.

comparison of this most glorious Sun and his righteousness. We should then, with St. Paul, 'count all things but loss in comparison of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord,' and should 'count them but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him; not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'¹ We should then leave gazing upon the trifles of the lower world, and should be always looking up to the Sun of righteousness, so as to be enlightened by him.² With such a light as will discover to us the glories of the other world, together with the way that leads to it.

We should then abhor and detest the works of darkness, and walk as the children of light, and accordingly shine as lights in the world. And then we should have the light of God's countenance shining continually upon us, enlightening, enlivening, and refreshing our whole souls, and purifying both our hearts and lives, so as to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; in that everlasting light which comes from the Sun of righteousness, who liveth and reigneth, and shineth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.

¹ Phil. iii. 8, 9.

² Psal. xxxiv. 5.

THE END.

THE
GREAT NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE
OF
FREQUENT COMMUNION.

BY
[WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, BY THE REV. H. STEBBING, M. A.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THE religion of Christ offers two blessings of incalculable worth to the human soul : salvation is the prime object of anxiety to an awakened mind, and salvation sends forth the living light of hope from every passage of the gospel. But the soul once taught to trust in divine mercy, then aims at the perfect performance of the divine will ; and conformity, in purity and holiness, with the divine image. To answer the desires which thus rise in the soul conscious of, and thankful for, redemption, the gospel abounds in offers of grace ; and every faithful believer in the Saviour, regards its sanctifying influence as not less essential to his happiness than redemption itself. Wherever there is faith there is a holy anxiety for renovation : in proportion as the terrific nature of sin is discovered, the mind grows wretched under its pressure ; and the love of God increasing, truth, purity, and holiness are sought as a bright and precious

clothing, the only fit garments of souls serving and worshipping the infinite goodness.

But the grace thus offered, and so greatly valued by the people of God, can only flow to us through Christ. Supposing, then, that we acknowledge him for a Saviour, the means of sanctification will be inestimably precious in our eyes; and to obtain and employ them will form the most important object of existence. Instead, therefore, of neglecting any ordinance by which faith can obtain nourishment, or the habit of devotion be strengthened, we shall seek every help of this kind with the utmost assiduity, consciousness of weakness teaching humility, but the hope of glory carrying the soul, even in its lowliness, to the throne of heaven. The privilege of approaching the Almighty Father by prayer is valued according to the state of the mind; and that which is true of every exercise of faith and devotion is especially so of those by which the believer is brought into communion with his Saviour. In the institution of the Sacrament of Communion Christ provided for the comfort as well as the spiritual advancement of his people. Beautifully emblematical of peace and union, this commemoration of his death combines with the work of grace the assurance of love. Faith rejoices to see therein the mystery of redemption, but contemplates, with a still more vivid delight, that full stream of renovating grace which pours freely from

the offered sacrifice. To know that Christ died for our sins is a comforting conviction; but to be made partakers of his sufferings by a visible act of faith, carries conviction from the mind to the heart, or from the outer circle of our intellectual, to the innermost depths of our spiritual being. Knowledge thus planted imbibes life from every ray of truth, and becomes fruitful in the production of those bright and holy thoughts, which form the golden links of the chain that bind earth to heaven. Still further, Christ has assured us, that he will both accept our faithful participation in this rite as an act of love, and will return it with the fullest demonstrations of his presence: so that we have herein the surest method of giving the highest possible value to our knowledge, the best means for procuring large supplies of grace, and a ready way to Christ himself, who will anticipate our efforts to rise, by descending in the fulness of his love into our hearts and spirits.

To those, therefore, who desire to glorify God, and acknowledging the efficacy of Christ's atonement to grow in grace, and in love and knowledge, the sacrament of the Lord's supper offers inestimable advantages. And, whenever God's spirit prevails over men's worldly and sensual dispositions, there Christ's invitation to this blessed feast of divine things is humbly, but joyfully accepted. No obstacle is allowed to stand in the way of such

a privilege, there being no object that can merit comparison with the good offered in this institution. To make excuses against receiving the means of happiness is manifestly inconsistent with reason; and it is consequently a most convincing proof of infidelity to decline, from time to time, approaching the Lord's table. A certain advantage must attend our participation in the ordinance, if Christ's promises are to be received; and the plain inference, if we neglect it, is, that we either disbelieve Christ, or place no value on his offers.

The first disciples of our Lord were characterized by a deep and abiding principle of love. It was this which inspired the souls of his apostles, when they assembled around him at his last supper, hung with trembling anxiety on the words of his lips, and melted into grief, when they saw, dimly approaching, his time of trial and agony. Not to have been present at the table to which he had called them for the last time, would have seemed so great a dereliction of duty, that the traitor Judas dare not venture on absenting himself, dark and terrible as must have been the workings of his conscience. Christians are bound to reflect much on the love and fidelity of the original followers of the Redeemer: they would find thereby an answer to all their objections to receiving the communion, and learn to rejoice in the method which it opens to them of coming to their Saviour. At the very beginning of the system

to which they owe their hopes of immortality, the principle of action established by their fellow-believers was this,—to leave all to follow Christ. His call was sufficient, when they as yet knew but little of his divine nature, to draw them from worldly pursuits; and few were the lessons they had received from his lips, when they proved themselves willing to endure the many hardships and insults which could not fail to be their lot. ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,’ was the affectionate exclamation of Peter, when the Lord questioned their fidelity. ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him,’ was the equally ready expression of Thomas, when he thought him in danger: and in all his perilous and wearisome journeys, in his stern encounters with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and when he reproved the multitude with his heart-searching questions, they were at his side, nor shrunk from the danger in which he thereby seemed to place both himself and them. And still were they with him when the dark hour of agony arrived. True it is, they could not sustain the burden they had then to bear; but the Lord himself apologized for them: ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak:’ and, ‘they were heavy with sorrow,’ are the words of the evangelist—with sorrow for the troubles that were coming upon their Master. The terrors of the judgment-hall, of the preparation for

the crucifixion, of Calvary and Golgotha, were too great for their faith or their fortitude; but their minds no sooner recovered from the first awful surprise, than they again assembled together, to await, though in the midst of enemies, the will of their Lord. And when Christ did again manifest himself to them, what were their expressions of love and joy! What readiness did they not show to receive his commands, and become the ministers of his gospel! There was no drawing back, no hesitation as to what they should do; but joyfully hearkening to his promises, they professed themselves willing to abide the fulfilment of his designs. Then the Holy Spirit was poured upon them; and how did they receive it? As those who had looked and prayed for it with intense earnestness of desire. It prompted no sentiment which they did not utter; it made no motion in their consciences, but it was at once apparent in their language: wherever it inclined to lead them, they obeyed and went, though it led them into the presence of their fiercest and most powerful enemies: and when afflictions came, they still spoke as before in the same tone of confidence and rejoicing. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' was the fond and triumphant exclamation of one and all. Nor was this sentiment confined to those who were especially chosen by the Lord to be his apostles and ministers. Even before his glory was

manifested by his rising from the dead, he had followers from among the people, ready in all things to obey his will. Witness the conduct of Zacchæus, and of the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment, and of both the sisters of Lazarus, and of Lazarus himself. They were none of them apostles, but were persons left in the ordinary circumstances of life; and were only induced to love Christ by the power of his wisdom on their hearts. And this was the case in after times. It was not the apostles, or first seventy disciples only, who received the gift of the Holy Ghost, but a mighty multitude, even three thousand souls were on one day converted; and the character of these new converts, as described by St. Luke in the Acts, plainly shows how entirely they yielded themselves up to the guidance of the blessed Spirit. 'They continued steadfastly,' says he, 'in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart; praising God, and having favour with all the people.' On turning to the Apostolic epistles, we find what was the character of Christians at a somewhat later

period. Read, for example, the introduction to the first epistle to the Corinthians: what does St. Paul say to that people? 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' In the second epistle to the same people, even though he had had cause to reprove some instances of sin among them, he speaks of them as a people ready in all things to obey the word of the Spirit: 'We were comforted in your comfort,' says he. To the Ephesians he says, that he had heard of their 'faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints;' and he describes them as 'builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.' To the Philippians he says, 'that they had always obeyed, not as in his presence only, but much more in his absence.' And thus throughout his epistles we see running a train of affectionate congratulations, respecting the growing influence of the gospel on the minds of those who received it; every expression that is made use of tending to prove that the obedience rendered was that of the heart and spirit; that the precepts of Christ and his apostles were taken as forming the grand rule of universal conduct; and that the hopes and expectations which

result from the Christian faith, were sufficient to support them under all the discouragements which they experienced from the world without, or the weakness and doubtings of their own spirits within. Nor did this deep, experimental acknowledgment of the power of the gospel, and of the Holy Ghost, cease with the departure of the apostles and first preachers of the truth to the scene of their reward. The same grace being given, the same obedience, the same love and zeal were evinced ; and thousands, during several ages after the words were uttered by St. Paul, went to the stake triumphantly exclaiming, ‘ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? ’ Churches rose in the strength of the faith thus nobly proved ; their discipline was founded on the principles it dictated ; the words and actions of Christians, in all the ordinary walks and trials of life, were in strict conformity with the same rule ; and simplicity of manners, purity of sentiment, devotion and love to God, were every where the known characteristics of the followers of Jesus.

And what was it which enabled, or induced these our forerunners to follow their Saviour with such untiring perseverance ? To encounter so many dangers without shrinking, and bear so many trials with a fortitude so serene, so noble, and so cheerful ? It was this : they had weighed well

both the cost and the advantage of their choice. Christianity, they knew, was a system introduced to save the world from the effects of sin ; to reconcile it to God, and not only to reconcile it, but to renew and sanctify it : and they were well aware that a mighty conflict would take place between the devil, arming men's passions for the strife, and the powers of heaven employed in this holy work. They knew that those who ranged themselves on the side of Christ, must stand exposed to the storm which hell would raise at the mention of his name, and that the sorrow he endured for sin must consequently, in part, be theirs. When trouble and temptation came, therefore, they were not surprised ; they bore them as furnishing the conditions by which they were allowed to call themselves by the name of Christ : and this they were enabled to do, by the influence and power of faith. ' They beheld the Lord always at their right hand ; ' knew him by his presence in their souls as well as through his gospel ; foresaw the glorious consequences which would attend the establishment of his kingdom in truth and love, and their own exaltation and happiness as adopted children of the most high God.

Animated by these holy dispositions, the Christians of an earlier age regarded the commemoration of the Lord's supper with feelings of the liveliest interest. He had promised to give them

his blessed Spirit, and they felt themselves renewed and sanctified ; he had promised to be present with them, when they performed this duty in remembrance of him, and they knew that he would fulfil his promise, and be in the midst of them as they bowed around his altar. And could they love him, could they be engaged in his service, and not desire thus to enjoy his presence ? Could they be negligent of an ordinance so fraught with spiritual delight ? Could they allow any worldly care, troubles, or engagements to separate between them and their Saviour, thus appealing to their holiest and noblest sympathies ? So far were they from this, that for a considerable period, the church had no punishment to inflict so feared as that of exclusion from the Lord's table. The least spiritual of Christians dreaded this with indescribable terror. It was felt as the loss of the means of salvation ; as a most awful type of final separation from Christ and his people ; as a banishment from the circle illuminated by divine love into the outer darkness of a condemned world. Fierce soldiers and licentious monarchs were smote to the heart by being declared unworthy of the communion ; and little as such characters knew, spiritually, of Christ, his power, dominion, and goodness being acknowledged, drew for a time all men to the cross and the altar.

Such was the conduct of professing Christians in a former period : and why is it not the same in this our day ? Is the Lord's arm shortened that it

cannot save? Or is salvation itself become less precious? Do we begin to forget that we are indebted to Christ for the possession of existence as beings rational and immortal, and for whatever pertains to us as such, or that the whole system of our nature has been ransomed by the blood of redemption, and depends for its renovation on the consequent gifts of grace? There is reason to fear that this forgetfulness of the main truths of the gospel has invaded many. Christianity appeals so immediately to men's souls, that it demands a very intense consciousness of spiritual existence to render its precepts either applicable, or intelligible. But the tendency of passion is opposed to this state of feeling: the outward, visible world, attracts attention by perpetual persuasions to enjoyment, and its promises are generally fulfilled just sufficiently to establish the heart in habits of indulgence and sensual obedience. It would otherwise be a matter of wonder how the mind of man could ever have degenerated into that state of grossness which first rendered it insensible to the spiritual nature of the Deity, and the necessity of spiritual worship. We are ourselves so spiritual, that nothing less than a self-forgetfulness, darkening and degrading the whole being, could produce such an effect: but strange as it seems, that man, at any period, could thus become blind to a grand principle of his own nature, much more wonderful is it to find, that he can remain so while enjoying the light

of a very advanced civilization: for what is there in civilization which distinguishes the condition of society from the barbarism to which it is opposed, that does not perpetually point to the spiritual character of human nature? What is improvement but the result of the awakened internal energies of man? What is knowledge but the observation, and the record, and the communication of those events and opinions which proceed from the impulses of invisible mind, or are the fruit of mind itself? Is it not wonderful then, that living as we do amid innumerable demonstrations, amid the most palpable proofs, of the power of that spiritual portion of our being, we should be continually forgetting it? continually falling into indifference respecting its interests and relations? Did we not know the actual state of the case, would it not seem much more probable that men would forget the mere corporeal part of their being—the mere perishable shell—the dust and ashes, which envelop the everlasting spirit, than that they should neglect the spirit itself? Did we not actually see that the contrary is the fact, should we not expect to find the wishes of mankind ever tending towards the acquisition of some spiritual dignity, some mental splendour, some soul-thirsted-for delight, rather than the gains of pleasure which blind and stupify the very soul which makes them human?

But further: if it be strange that men should at

any time forget that they are spiritual ; and far more wonderful that they should do so in a state of great civilization, still more wonderful is it that this should be the case when they are actually solicited to thought by a dispensation intended immediately for their redemption and exaltation as spiritual creatures. And who can doubt, when the state of the world is fairly considered, that men do forget their souls, even when living under the light of the gospel ? The ordinary amusements of people of fashion being the result of great artificial refinement, may seem free from sensuality, and not inimical to the laws of reason and morality ; but, in reality, they do foster the one, and undermine the other. The pursuits of the lower classes are, for the most part, daringly opposed to purity and thoughtfulness ; and when the business of life is examined, when the mode in which it is carried on, the means employed to secure success, the objects contemplated in success, are cautiously considered, it will be found, that the mass of mankind in the ordinary occupations of life, do positively forget that they have souls—do so entirely devote themselves to the cares of this world, that the existence of another is but a mere shadow in their memories, the phantom of a story told them in the days of their childhood. The best proof to be given of this absence of spiritual consciousness is the rareness with which, whether among a few or many persons, any allusion is heard to the interests of the

soul ; any sign is evinced that the spirit is awake while the tongue speaks ; that there are views, and intentions, and hopes, and desires, quickening the inner man, setting the principles of his being at work, which do not belong altogether to this lower world. I will put it to the reader, whether this may not be taken as a proof, that men in general do forget that they are spiritual creatures : whether, once in a thousand times, in his conversation either with friends or strangers, he hear any thing which might not as well come from the mouth were there no immortal, no God-inspired, no God-worshipping soul within the breast ?

It seems to be plain then, that men think not spiritually : and hence we learn how they first began to lose sight of God who is pure spirit ; how they have continued to forget his true attributes through successive ages of advancing civilization ; and how they still disregard them even under the light of the gospel. But since they thus forget both their own nature and that of God, it is no wonder that they mistake that of the gospel ; or that when its spiritual character is forced upon their attention, they should endeavour so to shadow it by their systems and reasonings, as to render it less manifestly opposed to their own principles and condition. We accordingly find that, a very few centuries after Christ finished the work of redemption, the spiritual truth which he had given to mankind

as the most precious boon of heavenly love, was very generally rejected for the spurious systems invented by the cunning artificers of a new gospel; and that even to the present day there are many who speak in the name of Christ, and pretend to expound his gospel, who leave out in their expositions all that which is most characteristic of the gospel—all that which it is most needful for dark, corrupt, perishing sinners to be made acquainted with, and acknowledge as the word of God. And how are we to avoid the general danger? The Old Testament even contains numerous and direct indications that men's souls cannot be made obedient to the divine law without spiritual sanctification: 'Make clean my heart; renew a right spirit within me,' is the language perpetually employed, and which could never have been used by men not convinced that all truth and holiness must have their operative energy in divine grace. But what was the first lesson taught by Christ? What was the foundation on which he rested the sublime system by which a kingdom was to be eternally established of pure and righteous men? 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And what was the promise with which he summed up the revelations which he made peculiarly to his few chosen followers? What was the assurances with which he consoled them—by which he made it ap-

parent, that it was better for their interests that he should die upon the cross, and be carried up into heaven, than that he should remain with them as he then was? It was a promise of the Holy Spirit, as the agent of their regeneration, as an internal minister to their souls of a new and vital principle of holiness. And what was the great signal of the success of these very men when they went about calling upon sinners to repent, and receive Christ as the author of their salvation? The Holy Ghost came upon them, the Holy Ghost sanctified them, gave them power over unclean spirits, gave them ability to do all things in the name of Christ. And looking through that glorious volume of many revelations, all held together by the pervading breath of divine mercy, and through that part especially which was written after the fulfilment of Christ's promise to his disciples, what truth is conjoined in inseparable unity with that which forms the corner-stone of the system—with the doctrine of redemption itself? What but this of sanctification by the Holy Spirit? St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, names this precious peculiarity of the gospel, as the chief object to inspire them with love and gratitude: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.' In another place he tells them, that the gift of the Holy Spirit was 'the earnest of their inheritance

until the redemption of the purchased possession.' To the Corinthians he says, that the mysteries which were hidden from the world, God had revealed unto them by his Spirit 'God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;' and, 'We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' And yet further: 'The natural man receiveth not the things of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' And so on through every portion of the apostolic epistles, which the worldly and sensual pretenders to Christian knowledge would gladly keep for ever closed, but which shall remain open even till the day of the Lord's coming to judgment, and then shall confound them and their sophistries, till their faces gather the blackness of shame and despair.

But we have next to consider in what way this spiritual system, operating on the spiritual nature of man, is to become developed,—made outwardly manifest by the production of certain effects answerable to its nature and design. And here we must remark, that in all inquiries on subjects of this kind, it must always be borne in mind, that the Holy Spirit being not a mere principle, not a secondary agent, but a divine, Almighty person, He

must be present to the soul, if the soul is to enjoy any degree of his heavenly influence, in his own entire, and indescribable majesty: that is, that there can be no such a process as a partial sanctification of the inner man; that there can be no such a thing as a man made holy in one respect, and left unholy in another; for if the blessed Spirit be present at all, the man is sanctified wholly; and if the Spirit be not present to him, then he is altogether unholy, whatever may be the imitations which he makes of sanctity. But when the soul's entire sanctification is effected through the power of this minister of grace, then those results are to be looked for of which the Scriptures speak, as the ornaments and characteristics of the people of God. And here, again, we have another peculiarity to notice. These results are not mere particular, or single acts of good; not partial or temporary exhibitions of piety; but entire, comprehensive classes of virtues, each carrying the soul, by its own proper influence, round a vast circle of duties; each illumining the path of life with a bright, divine radiance; and each demonstrating, by its distinct effects, the presence of that eternal Spirit who is the parent of the whole divine family of graces that adorn and animate the regenerated soul. Hence it is, that the fruit of the Spirit is stated to be 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

temperance :’ under each of which names is embraced a vast train of the noblest virtues, and by the possession of which, the result of his sanctification, the Christian is made worthy to be called a child of God, one of the elect and beloved of heaven.

If professed believers in the gospel, then, are to be brought to the table of the Lord with warm and thankful hearts, they must have first learned to feel as spiritual beings, and have sought the renewal of their souls by the Holy Ghost. A very humble advancement in the knowledge of the truth is sufficient to render a man acceptable to the Saviour. But the acknowledgment of his gospel implies simplicity of heart, sorrow for sin, affection, and a willing attention to the precept : ‘ As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.’ To neglect the sacred ordinance, by which we may testify our communion with so gracious a Master, is to dare God’s anger on the one hand, and the power of sin on the other. If we believe the gospel, there is no salvation out of Christ : we must be found in him, be clothed with his righteousness, sealed with his Spirit, adopted with God in him and for him. Unless this be the case, we still bear our sins : he is not our Lord or our Saviour. We reject him ; for they who gather not with him are against him ; and the Almighty will pursue us till we perish under his

fierce displeasure. Satan, on the other hand, seeing us so indifferent to the means of safety, will not fail to press closer and closer upon us. One temptation succeeding, he will try another; and encouraged by every new advantage to urge us more precipitately forward, we shall speedily find ourselves on the brink of that abyss, from which it is scarcely possible to retreat.

Thus unsafe is it to neglect the ordinance of the communion. Thus probable is it, that if we refuse to come to the Saviour according to the instituted methods of mercy, the Saviour will leave us to our fate; a consideration sufficiently awful, we should imagine, to move all but the most desperately impenitent to reflection. But it is not for safety only, as we stated in the beginning, that the genuine Christian sighs. He desires to be ever advancing in the knowledge of God and his Redeemer. He strives to follow the divine counsel of the apostle, by leaving the beginnings of doctrine, and going on 'unto perfection:' and the acquirements which he makes in the love of truth, in the ability to obey the Holy Spirit, and in those dispositions which most resemble the graces of his Saviour's character, are his riches, his glory, and his comfort. On all these accounts the sacrament of the Lord's supper is to them a rich and most acceptable banquet: their experience affords manifold proofs of its efficacy, as a

refreshment of the soul ; and they would as soon think it lawful or becoming to violate the calls and sympathies of every social relation, as to be backward in establishing their communion with Christ.

Let the reader now, then, question himself. Am I indeed a disciple and follower of Christ ; and does my character present any traces whatever of his heavenly spirit ? Have I love ? that pure, glorious, elevating virtue, the very light of the moral being, subduing all selfishness, all harshness and malice, and uniting every thought and every word with kindness ? Have I joy ? Do I know enough of the gospel to be able always to rejoice in the Lord, and contemplate his promises as a balm to my heart ? Have I peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness ? those calm, genial virtues, which ever keep the mind free from the terrors of fear, the ranklings of anxiety, the stings of envy, the gloom of pride, and open it to all benign and comforting sympathies. Have I faith ? that bond of union between God and man, to which the righteousness of Christ hath given an inestimable worth, and which, as the leader of the bright chorus of thoughts and virtues that are fit for heaven, bears them forward, and makes them acceptable to the Father. Have I meekness ? that mild, sweet grace, through which the glory of Christ beamed with softened splendour on the souls of his followers ; that grace which so especially charac-

terized all he did and said ; and which is set forth as one of the essential marks of regeneration. Have I temperance ? that virtue which describes the state of the soul when, purified from the taint of unholy desires, elevated above the scenes of earthly pleasure, it finds happiness in God, and therefore keeps itself pure, delights in the contemplation of heavenly things, and therefore refuses to participate in aught that can cloud the understanding.

It is thus the Christian should question himself. If he have not the seeds of these virtues in his soul, he is a Christian only in name, and has the work of salvation still to begin ; but if he find any traces in his soul of a genuine belief in Christ, let him rejoice that he may go to his table, and there strengthen his yet trembling spirit with the food of angels.

H. S.

ADVANTAGE
OF
FREQUENT COMMUNION.

1 Cor. xi. 26.

*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,
ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

THE Lord's death, here spoken of, is the death of the Lord, the Almighty and eternal Son of God ; that death, which he suffered in the nature, and in the stead of mankind in general, and particularly of us who are here present ; that death, whereby he expiated our sins, and made complete satisfaction to the divine truth and justice for them : that death, whereby he appeased the wrath which he that made us had justly conceived against us, and hath reconciled him again unto us : that death, whereby he delivered us from the slavery of sin and Satan, and asserted us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God : that death, whereby he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made himself a curse for us : that death, whereby he purchased for us both

pardon and peace, and mercy, and grace, and power to eschew evil and do good, and all the blessings we can ever have or desire, either in this world or the next ; that death, by virtue whereof he entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us, and therefore is able to save to the utmost, them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.¹ This is that Lord's death, which the apostle here saith we show, as often as we eat the bread, and drink the cup he speaks of in the verses before my text ; where he saith, that ' the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me.' After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, ' this cup is the New Testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.' In which words we have Christ's own institution of the sacrament of the last supper, together with the end of it declared by himself, saying, at the institution of the bread, ' This do in remembrance of me : ' and again, at that of the cup, ' This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me ; ' that is, (as is signified by the institution itself,) ' in remembrance of me,' as dying for the sins of the world, and yours among the rest. And that this is the great end of this holy institution, the apostle further proves, and explains in the words of my text, from this reason ; because, hereby we show the Lord's death ; the bread shows the breaking of his body, the cup shows the shedding of his

¹ Heb. vii. 25.

blood ; and so both together show the death he suffered for us : ‘ for as often,’ saith he, ‘ as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.’

On which words we may first observe, that every time the sacrament of the Lord’s supper is administered, his death is thereby shown and declared to all that are there present. As when the Jews eat the paschal lamb, the master of the family declared the reasons why they eat it with bitter herbs, and why with unleavened bread, and the like. So here, when we eat the bread, and drink the cup, according to Christ’s institution, we thereby declare the reasons of it, though not by words, yet by the very act itself, and the several circumstances of it. By the breaking of the bread, we declare Christ’s body to be broken and wounded to death ; by the cup, we declare his blood to be shed, or poured out for the sins of the world ; and by distributing both the bread and the cup to each communicant apart, we declare to every one particularly, that Christ died for his sins, and that he may be saved by Christ’s death, if he will but receive and apply it to himself, as he ought, by a quick and lively faith.

In the next place, we may here observe, that the apostle doth not say, that Christ’s death is repeated, or that he is offered up again every time this Sacrament is administered, but only that the Lord’s death is shown by it. And therefore that this is not, as the papists absurdly imagine, a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead, but only commemorative and declarative of that one sacrifice, which Christ once offered to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. We may likewise ob-

serve, that the apostle doth not say, as often as ye eat this bread, ye show the Lord's death; but ye do it, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup. And therefore, unless both kinds be administered, as Christ's institution is not observed, so neither is the end of it attained; for his death is not shown by any one, but by both together.

Moreover, we may observe, that the apostle here plainly calls it bread, and the cup, or wine; not the very body and blood of Christ; yea, he saith, it is bread we eat, and it is the cup, or wine, we drink; and therefore, we do not eat the very body that hung upon the cross, nor drink the blood which was there spilt for us; but only in a sacramental sense, which quite overthrows the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Again, we may from hence observe, that this was no temporary institution, which was to continue only for some time, but to the end of the world; or, as the apostle here expresses it, till he, our Lord and Saviour, come. As from the beginning of the world, as often as they offered, according to its first institution, any bloody sacrifice to God, they thereby foreshowed the death of Christ, typified by it, until his first coming into the world to save it: so since that time, as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, according to Christ's own institution, we show forth his death all along, until his second coming into the world to judge it. So that it is now by this sacrament, that mankind is, and always must be, put in mind of their Saviour, and what he suffered for them; and therefore, this can never be laid aside, but must continue in the church to the end of the world. Neither can that be reckoned any part of Christ's church, where

this his own most holy institution is rejected, dis-used, or never observed as it ought.

Lastly, we may here observe, that as this sacrament is to continue always in the church ; so it must be often repeated by the same persons in it. The other sacrament, even baptism, is likewise to be always administered in the church ; but it can be administered but once to one and the same person ; but the apostle here speaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, saith to the same persons, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ; and to the same purpose our Lord himself, in the institution of the cup, saith, 'This do ye, as often as you drink it:' plainly implying, that this should be often done by those who are once admitted into his church : as a man can be born but once, but when he is once born, he must often eat and drink such things as God hath appointed for the preservation of his natural life ; so when a man is once regenerate, and born again of water and of the Spirit, he must often eat this bread, and drink this cup, as the great means appointed by Christ himself for the preservation of his spiritual life ; which can never be supported aright without this spiritual food, no more than the natural life can without bodily sustenance.

This, therefore, is that, which I intend by God's assistance, in a more especial manner, to speak to at this time. And it is but time to say all we can of it, when this holy sacrament is so generally neglected, as it now is (to our shame be it spoken) all the kingdom over. Blessed be God, except some few heathens, which are among us, such I mean, as were never yet baptized, the nation in

general is Christian, the people all profess Christ's religion, and have it established among them by civil laws and sanctions. They are all admitted into Christ's church, and hope to be saved in it; they all believe him to be the only Saviour of the world, and therefore expect salvation only from him. They all know too, or at least have heard, that he instituted this holy sacrament, and commanded them to receive it in remembrance of him: and yet after all, they regard it no more than as if it had never been instituted by him; no more than as if it were no matter whether they ever remembered him or no. I need not go far for instances. In this place, where it is as constantly administered, and as much frequented as in any part of the kingdom, there are several who receive it very seldom; some never, unless it be to qualify them for an office. Many, a great many I fear, of those who are now present, never yet received it at all; but though they be twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years old, and upwards, yet have lived all this while in the neglect of this divine institution, having never been so much as once at our Lord's table, nor knowing what it is to partake of that most blessed body and blood which was broken and shed for them. And so it is in all parts of the kingdom; which is a very sad and melancholy consideration. They who have any love, either for God or their neighbours, cannot but be grieved at their hearts to think of it. We have only one Saviour in the world, and he hath instituted only one Sacrament to put us always in mind of him; and yet that people, that Christians, should slight that! What shall I say? I know not how to ex-

press their folly and ingratitude, much less the dismal consequences of it. But how to remedy it I know not. I have done what I could; I have taken all occasions to convince you of your sin and danger in neglecting this blessed sacrament, and to persuade you to a more frequent receiving of it; but, I see, nothing will do: indeed, nothing can do it, but the almighty power of God, whom I therefore beseech, of his infinite mercy, to open men's eyes, that they may 'see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, before they be hid from them.' And then, I am sure, this sacrament would be as much frequented as it hath been hitherto neglected. But seeing he is usually pleased to do this great work by the ministry of his word, I shall make it my business at this time, in his name, to put you in mind of your duty and interest in this particular, and so set before you such reasons, why you ought to take all opportunities of receiving the mystical body and blood of Christ your Saviour, as, I hope, by his blessing, may prevail with many to do it. God grant it may do so with all that hear me at this time.

For this purpose, therefore, I desire you to consider, first, that this is Christ's own institution and command. He, 'who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and yet made himself of no reputation for your sakes:' he, who loved you so, as to 'give himself for you:' he, who 'laid down his own life' to redeem and save you: he, the very night before he died for you, instituted this holy sacrament; and then said to all that hoped to be saved by him, and to you among others, 'Do this in remembrance of me:' and, 'do this, as oft as ye

drink it, in remembrance of me.' What ! and will you that hope to be saved by him, will you never do this at all ? or only now and then, when perhaps you have nothing else to do ? How then can ye hope to be saved by him ? Do ye think that he will save you, whether ye observe his commands or no ? And which of all his commands can ye ever observe, if ye do not observe this, which is so plain, so easy, so useful, and so necessary for you ? No, deceive not yourselves : he that came into the world, and died on purpose to save you, you may be confident would never have required you to do this, and as often as you do it, to remember him ; but that it is necessary for your salvation that ye do it, and that ye do it as often as ye can, in remembrance of him. And if it had been necessary in no other, as it is in many respects, yet his very commanding it makes it so to you, and to your salvation. For as he is the only author of eternal salvation, he is so only ' to those who obey him ;' ¹ that is, ' to those who observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded.' ² But this is one of those things which he hath commanded ; and, therefore, unless you do this, you do not obey him, and so have no ground to expect salvation from him. He himself hath told you in effect, that he will not save you, in that he said, ' Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' ³ But ye all know, that he who lives in any wilful and known sin, or in the wilful neglect of any known duty, he hath not yet repented, and turned to God, but is still in his natural estate, in a state of sin and damnation. And if he happen to die

¹ Heb. v. 9.² Matt. xxviii. 20.³ Luke, xiii. 3, 5.

so, he must inevitably perish : there is no help in the world for it.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye had need look about you. Christ your Saviour hath expressly commanded you often to receive the sacrament of his body and blood in remembrance of him. And therefore, you, who never yet received it, have lived all this while in the wilful breach of a known law, and, by consequence, in a wilful and known sin. And you, who receive it but seldom, do not fully obey or come up to the law, which plainly requires you to do it often ; at least, if it may be had. It is true, should God, in his providence, cast you upon a place where you could not receive it, if ye would, I do not doubt but he would accept your earnest desires of it, as well as if ye did receive it ; and would make up the great losses you sustained in your spiritual estate for want of it, some other way. But blessed be his great name, this is not your case ; for he, in his good providence, hath so ordered it, that you live in a place where this holy sacrament is actually celebrated every Lord's-day, and may be so, if there be occasion, every day in the year. Our church requires the first, and hath provided for the other, by ordering that the same collect, epistle, and gospel, which is appointed for the Sunday, shall serve all the week after ; and, by consequence, the whole communion-service, of which they are a part. And therefore, unless you receive it, and receive it often too, you will live in the gross neglect, if not in a plain contempt of Christ's command ; as you will one day find, to your shame and sorrow : for how well soever ye may otherwise live, this one sin is

enough to ruin and destroy you for ever. For, as St. James saith, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.'¹ And therefore, whatsoever else ye do, if ye do not this, but offend in this one point, you are liable to all the punishments that are threatened in the law of God. Neither is there any way to avoid them, except you repent, and turn from this as well as from all other sins.

And that ye may not think, that receiving of this blessed sacrament only now and then, as perhaps two or three times a year, will excuse you from the imputation of living in the neglect of Christ's command, I desire you to consider, how the apostles themselves and the primitive Christians understood it. Which they sufficiently declared by their practice: for when our Lord was gone to heaven, and had, according to his promise, sent down the Holy Spirit upon his apostles, and by that means brought into his church about three thousand souls in one day, it is said of them, 'that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,'² and of all that believed, it is said, that 'they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.'³ Where we may observe, first, that by breaking of bread, in the New Testament, is always meant the administration of the Lord's Supper. Secondly, this they are said to have done, *κατ' οἶκον*, 'from house to house,' as we translate it; or rather in the house, as the

¹ James, ii. 10.² Acts, ii. 42.³ Ib. ii. 46.

Syriac and Arabic versions have it; and as the phrase, *κατ' οἶκον*, is used by the apostle himself.¹ That is, they did it either in some private house, where there was a church, or, more probably, in some of the houses or chambers belonging to the temple, where they daily continued. Thirdly, as they continued daily in the temple at the hours of prayer, to perform their solemn devotions there, so they daily received the holy sacrament, and eat this spiritual food 'with gladness and singleness of heart.' This being, indeed, the chief part of their devotions, whensoever they could meet together to perform them, especially upon the Lord's-day, as the Holy Ghost himself informs us, saying, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, being ready to depart on the morrow.'² Where we see, they did not only break bread, or, administer the sacrament of our Lord's supper upon the first day of the week, which we, from St. John, call the Lord's-day; but upon that day they came together for that end and purpose. It is true, St. Paul being to go away next day, he took that opportunity when they were met together for that end, to give them a sermon; but that was not the end of their meeting together at that time; they did not come to hear a sermon, though St. Paul himself was to preach; but they came together to administer and receive Christ's mystical body and blood; which plainly shows, that this was the great work they did every Lord's-day; and that they came together then on purpose to meet with Christ, and to partake of him at his own

¹ Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19.² Acts, xx. 7.

table. And seeing that the law itself required, 'that none should appear before the Lord empty,'¹ therefore St. Paul requires, that upon the first day of the week, when Christians thus met together to receive the sacrament, 'every one should lay by him in store,' as God prospered him for pious and charitable uses.² And hence proceeded that custom, which is still continued in our church, and ought to be so in all; that whensoever we appear before the Lord at his own table, we, every one, according to his ability, offer up something to him, of what he had bestowed upon us, as our acknowledgment of his bounty to us, in giving us whatsoever we have, and of his infinite mercy in giving himself for us.

Now seeing the apostles themselves, and such as they first converted and instructed in the faith of Christ, usually received this holy sacrament every day in the week, and constantly upon the Lord's-day, it cannot be doubted, but that they looked upon themselves as obliged by Christ's command to do so; and that when he said, 'Do this, as often as ye do it, in remembrance of me;' his meaning and pleasure was, 'that they should often do it, as often as they met together to perform their public devotion to him, if it was possible, or at least, upon the Lord's-day. And as this was the sense, wherein the apostles understood our Saviour's words; so they transmitted the same, together with the faith, to those who succeeded them. For Tertullian, who lived in the next century after the apostles, saith, that the sacrament of the eucharist, was commanded by our Lord to be celebrated in

¹ Exod. xxiii. 15.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

all Christian assemblies, even those which were held before day.¹ And before him Pliny the second, who was cotemporary with St. John, in the account he gave of the Christians manners to the emperor Trajan, saith, among other things, "That they were wont, upon a certain day, to meet together before it was light, to bind themselves by a sacrament, not to do any ill thing."² Which can be understood only of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as administered and received by them on the Lord's-day. And Justin Martyr himself, who lived in the next age after, in the apology he wrote to Antoninus Pius in the behalf of the Christians, giving a particular account of what they did in their public congregations, saith, that, *τῇ τῷ ἡλίῳ λεγομένη ἡμέρᾳ*, "upon that which is called the Day of the Sun, or Sunday, all Christians that live either in the cities, or in the country, meet together; where they hear the writings of the prophets and apostles read, and an exhortation made to them: and then they having all joined together in their common prayers, bread and wine is brought and consecrated, or blessed, by the president or minister, and distributed to every one there present, and carried by deacons to such as were absent." *Καὶ ἡ διάδοσις καὶ ἡ μετάληψις ἀπὸ τῶν εὐχαριστηθέντων ἐκάστῳ γίνεται*: "and the distribution and participation of the consecrated elements is made to every one."³ "And this food" saith he, *καλεῖται ὡαρ' ἡμῖν εὐχαριστία*, "is called by us the eucharist." From whence it appears, that in those days, every one that was at prayers and sermon, received also

¹ "In omnibus mandatum à domino, etiam Antelucanis cœtibus."—Tert. de Cor. Mil. cap. 3.

² Plin. Ep. lib. x. cap. 97.

³ Just. Martyr, Apo. 2.

the holy sacrament, at least upon the Lord's-day. None offered to go out, till that was over: or, if they did so, they were cast out of the church, as not worthy to be called Christians; as appears from the apostolical canons, made or collected about that time, or soon after: one whereof runs thus: Πάντας τῆς εἰσιδοντασπιστῆς, &c. "All believers that come to church, and hear the Scriptures, but do not stay to join in the prayers, and the holy communion, ought to be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the church."¹ It was then, it seems, reckoned a great disorder and confusion for any to go out of the church, as they now commonly do, till the whole service, of which the communion was the principal part, was all over: and if any did so, they were judged unfit to come to church, or keep company with Christians any longer. This was the discipline of the primitive and apostolic church. This was the piety of the first Christians; and it continued, in a great measure, for some ages, as might easily be shown. But this may be sufficient at present to prove, that the apostles and primitive Christians did not think, that they observed our Lord's command, in the institution of this holy sacrament, aright, by receiving it only now and then. For, as they would never have done it at all, but only in obedience to that command; so, in obedience to that command, they took all opportunities they could get of doing it: at least, they never omitted it upon the Lord's-day. But upon that day, whatsoever they did besides, they always did this in remembrance of what their great

¹ Can. Apostol. 9.

Lord and Saviour had done for them. And if we desire to be such Christians as they were, we must do as they did. We must, after their pious example, observe our Lord's command, by eating this bread, and drinking this cup, as often as we can; lest otherwise we lose the benefit of that death he suffered for us, by our neglecting to do what he hath commanded in remembrance of it. And, verily, to remember Christ and his death, is a thing of far greater consequence than people are commonly aware of. The people of God, under the law, by his own appointment, had it typified and represented to them every day in the year, by having two lambs offered up for a burnt-offering; the one in the morning, and the other in the evening, as a type of that 'lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.'¹ These were offered every day, besides the sin-offerings, peace-offerings, trespass-offerings, and such-like, as were offered upon particular occasions. Wherefore, these two lambs were called the continual burnt-offerings, as being continually offered every day in the week. And upon the sabbath-day there were two more added.² So that upon every sabbath-day in the year, there were four lambs offered, that they might be sure, at least upon that day, to think of that grand sacrifice, which was to be offered up for them. And it may not be amiss to observe, that every one of those lambs had a meat and a drink-offering to attend it. A meat-offering made of flower, and a drink-offering of wine; which are both the same elements which Christ himself in-

¹ Exod. xxix. 38; Numb. xxviii. 3; John, i. 29.

² Numb. xxviii. 9.

stituted, to signify his body and blood. And besides, the burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, and drink-offerings every sabbath-day, the high-priest was to set the shew bread upon the holy table, and to put frankincense thereon; which was to continue there before the Lord till the next sabbath, when the priests had eat the bread, and burnt the frankincense **לֶאֱתָרֶכְוֹר**, 'for a memorial, eve an offering made by fire unto the Lord.'¹ All which, as most things in the Levitical law, had, doubtless, some respect or other to Christ: as is intimated in the law itself, where it is said, that this shall be done by an 'everlasting covenant,'² even that which is founded in Christ. The bread, consisting of twelve loaves or cakes (according to the number of the tribes of Israel, and of Christ's apostles,) was set upon the table in two rows; which might put us in mind of the two natures in Christ, 'the bread of life which came down from heaven.'³ In Hebrew this is called **לֶחֶם פָּנִים**, 'the bread of the face,' because it was to be set before the face of God continually,⁴ as 'Christ continually appeareth in the presence of God for us.'⁵ Upon this bread was laid pure frankincense, called in Hebrew **לִבְנָה**, 'olibanum,' from its whiteness; by reason whereof it was used in sacrifices as a symbol of God's pardoning sin, as it was likewise of his acceptance of what was done, by the sweet scent it made when burnt. This was laid upon the bread, to be to it for a memorial, as the Hebrew words signify, to call to remembrance the offering made by fire unto the Lord; that is, the death of Christ, typified by all

¹ Lev. ii. 4, 5, 9, &c.; Exod. xxv. 30;

² John, vi. 33, 35.

³ Exod. xxv. 30.

⁴ Lev. xxiv. 8.

⁵ Heb. ix. 24.

such offerings. The bread was to be eaten, not burnt; but the pure frankincense that was laid upon it, was to be burnt, and by its sweet smell call to mind the death of Christ, by virtue whereof God smells a sweet savour, and accepts of the sacrifices and services we offer and perform to him.¹ And all this was to be done, the bread to be eaten, the frankincense burnt, and new put in their places every sabbath-day throughout the year; that upon that day especially, men might be put in mind of their Saviour, and accordingly place their faith on him for their pardon and acceptance with God.

There were many such ways, whereby the people of God in those days were constantly put in mind of what the Saviour of the world was to do and suffer for them. All which are now laid aside; and only this one sacrament of his last supper instituted by himself in the room of them. This is now our Christian show-bread, whereby we show the Lord's death till he come. This is our burnt-offering, our sin-offering, our trespass-offering, our thank-offering, our meat-offering, our drink-offering, and all the offerings required of us, whereby to commemorate our blessed Saviour, and what he hath done for us. And therefore, as the Jews were punctual and constant in observing all things prescribed to them; for the same end we certainly ought to do this as often as we can; this one thing which answers the end of all their offerings, and yet hath neither the trouble, nor the charges, nor the difficulty of any one of them.

Especially, considering that God would never

¹ 1 Peter, ii. 5.

have appointed so many ways, whereby to put them in mind of their Saviour, but that it was necessary for them to have him always in their minds. And it must needs be as necessary for us, as it was for them : otherwise he, who came into the world on purpose to save us, would never have commanded us to eat this bread, and drink this cup in remembrance of him. But he hath commanded us, not only to do it, but to do it for this very end, that we may remember him. And therefore we may be confident, that to remember him is very necessary to our being saved by him ; and, by consequence, that all who desire to be so in good earnest, must do this so often, as to keep him always fresh in their minds and memories. And the reason is plain ; for all the promises of salvation by Christ, are made only to those who believe in him : but this believing in him is not a transient act, or a thing to be done only once or twice ; but it is to be the continual work and employment of our lives. As we must constantly believe what he hath taught ; so we must constantly trust and depend on him for all things necessary to our salvation, according to the promises that he hath made us. He that doth not do this, cannot be truly said to believe in Christ at all ; or at least, not to any purpose. But it is impossible for us thus constantly to believe in Christ, without keeping him always in our minds. And it is as impossible for us to keep him thus always in our minds, without frequent receiving of this holy sacrament : if we could have done so without it, Christ would never have appointed this sacrament to put us in mind of him ; for he need not have done it.

The plain case is this : there is no way, whereby it is possible for any of us to be saved, but by Jesus Christ : nor by him, without believing in him. And therefore we had need use all the means we can for the exercising our faith in him, and keeping it always fixed upon him. But we can by no means do it so effectually, as by the frequent receiving of that holy sacrament, which he himself ordained for that very purpose, that we might remember him, so as to believe and trust on him for all things relating to our salvation. For he hath so ordered it, that this sacrament doth not bring him into our remembrance, only in a slight and superficial manner, without making any impression upon our minds : but it exhibits and presents him to our very eyes, as dying for our sins ; or, to use the apostle's words, ' Herein Jesus Christ is evidently set forth before our eyes, as crucified among us,'¹ whereby our minds are deeply affected, and our faith confirmed in him. All the promises, which God hath made us in Christ, being hereby sealed as it were, and delivered to us in his blood. As the sacrament of circumcision is said to be a ' token of the covenant betwixt God and man,'² and ' a seal of the righteousness of faith ;'³ so the sacrament of the Lord's supper both signifies and seals to us the covenant of grace founded in the death of Christ, there represented before our eyes ; whereby our faith is strengthened, and we are able to look upon ourselves as entitled to, and interested in, all the blessings which are promised in the said covenant, by the means of that body and blood, which we there behold as broken and shed

¹ Gal. iii. 1.² Gen. xvii. 11.³ Rom. iv. 11.

for us. For which purpose also, Christ himself, in the institution of it, calls the signs by the name of the thing signified, saying, 'This is my body, which is broken for you;' and, 'this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'¹ Whereby he fully assures us, that this is not common bread and wine, but his own body and blood, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual or sacramental sense: so that by eating this bread, and drinking this cup, we partake of his body and blood to all intents and purposes, for which the one was broken, and the other shed; and that too as much, or rather more, than we could have done it by eating his very body, and drinking his very blood in a carnal and literal sense. To the same purpose is that of the apostle: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' and, 'the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?''² Though it be not his very body and blood itself, it is the communion of them; they are both communicated to us: so that if we receive them, as we ought, by faith, we attain the end, wherefore his body was broken and his blood shed, even the remission of our sins. Which is therefore particularly mentioned by himself in the institution of the cup.

And this is that, which our church teacheth in her catechism, saying, "that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper." By the faithful: by such as act true faith, which as the apostle saith, 'is the substance of things hoped for, the

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28.

² 1 Cor. x. 16.

evidence of things not seen ;' by such the body and blood of Christ is verily and indeed received ; and only by such. Others see nothing there but bread and wine ; but they who have such a faith, in Christ's word, by it see his body and blood there ; their faith itself being the very evidence thereof to them. The elements are not transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ, as the papists absurdly imagine ; but the substance of the bread and wine still continues the same ; and therefore, without faith no man can receive any more than plain, though consecrated, bread and wine. But they who have, and at the same time act, that faith which is the 'substance of things hoped for,' do by that verily and indeed receive the body and blood of Christ, according to his word, when he said, 'This is my body,' and, 'this is my blood.' This Christ said, and this they believed ; and by their believing it, have it verified to them. It is to them that body which was so broken ; and that blood which was so shed for their sins. They receive it as such upon Christ's word, and accordingly partake of all the merits of it : whereby their sins are all as fully remitted to them, as if they themselves had already undergone all the punishments which the law had threatened against them ; for Christ having undergone them all in their stead ; and he having now communicated that body and blood, in which he did it, unto them ; and they having, by faith, accordingly received it ; the law is now satisfied as to them, and can no more require, that they should suffer the punishments which were due unto their sins, than it can require that Christ's body and blood, which they

have received, should be broken and shed again for them.

And as Christ here puts us upon the exercise of our faith, by calling what we receive, his own body and blood; so he doth likewise by offering and applying it particularly unto us, saying in the institution to the apostles, and in them, to every sound member of his church, 'This is my body which is given for you;' and, 'this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'¹ And therefore in the distribution both of the bread and cup, according to the order of our church, the minister saith to every particular communicant, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul to everlasting life. Take, and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee." And so in the cup: "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee." Which is much to be observed, as being of mighty use to the right exercising our faith in Christ, and so to our obtaining pardon and salvation by him; for Christ is said to have died for mankind in general; and all the promises in him are made not to this or that particular person, but to all that believe: and so every one is left to apply them, as well as he can, to himself. But now, in this holy sacrament, this is done to our hands; for here Christ himself, by his minister, assures every particular person singly and by himself, that his body was given for him, and his blood was shed for him or for her, which is an extraordinary help to our faith. For by this means, every one, upon

¹ Luke, xxii. 19, 20.

the receipt of the holy sacrament, hath a fair occasion, yea, reason given him, to think thus with himself.

MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRAMENT.

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. Blessed be God; blessed be the eternal Son of God, he himself is become my Saviour. He loved me, and gave himself for me, even for me also, the unworthiest of all his creatures. His body was broken, his blood was shed for me, and he hath now given it to me, that my sins may be pardoned, and that my soul may be saved by it. What then if my sins be many? What if my sins be great? I confess they are; so they are very many, and they are very great; but I am truly humbled for them; I heartily repent of them, I steadfastly resolve, by God’s assistance, never to return any more unto them, but to spend the rest of my life wholly in his service, and to his honour. What then need I fear? Shall I fear the curse of the law? My Saviour hath redeemed me from it, being made a curse for me. Shall I fear shame, or pain, or death itself? My Saviour hath suffered them all for me, so that none of them can now come near to hurt me. Shall I fear, that sin will still have dominion over me? My Saviour hath overcome it, and his grace shall be sufficient for me. Shall I fear the powers of hell? My Saviour hath triumphed over all, and will enable me to do so too. Shall I fear the wrath of God? My Saviour hath appeased it with his own blood, and so hath restored me to his love and favour; for he died for me. He himself hath now told me so; and therefore I believe it, and am now persuaded,

that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.' ”¹

Now, seeing the receiving of the Sacrament of his last supper conduceth so very much, both to the exercising and strengthening our faith in our blessed Saviour, we, who can never be saved without believing in him, cannot surely but acknowledge, that it is as much our interest, as it is our duty, to receive it as often as we can. For my own part I do not see how it is possible for us to live either so conformably or so piously, as becometh those who expect salvation by Christ, without it: for first, we cannot but be all conscious to ourselves of the many sins and failures that we are continually subject to, through the whole course of our lives. There is not a day passeth over our heads, without our doing something we ought not to do, or else, not doing something which we ought. Our thoughts, our affections, our words, our actions, are all one way or other faulty. The very best works we do, have something that is not good in them. So that every day we contract new guilt, and have more sins to answer for than we had the day before; but every sin that we commit, exposeth us to the wrath of almighty God, and makes us obnoxious to all the curses which he hath threatened in his word. The thoughts whereof cannot but often cut us to the heart, and make us cry out with David, 'Mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me to

¹ Rom. viii. 38, 39.

bear.’¹ But what then shall we do ? whither shall we go for ease ? where can we find any rest and quiet for our troubled minds ? Nowhere, certainly, so well as at our Lord’s table. It is only he that can give rest unto our souls, and it is there he doth it most effectually : for he there acquaints us, that he himself hath borne the punishment of our sins, and shows us how he did it, even by giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for them. We there see, that the Son of God died for the sins of the world, and for ours among the rest. Yea, he there tells us, he did so, by saying, ‘Take, eat ; this is my body which is given for you :’ and, ‘this is my blood which is shed for you ;’ for you and for your sins, as well as for any other. As if he should say to every particular person by himself, behold, and see what I have done, and what I have suffered for thee. It was for thee that I assumed a human body and blood. And this body I gave to be broken, this blood I gave to be shed for thee ; and I now give it to thee for the expiation of thy sins. Therefore be of good cheer, my Son, thy sins are pardoned. ‘Only be not faithless, but believing.’

He that thinks not this to be a great comfort must needs be very much hardened in his sins, so as not to feel the burden of them. For he that doth that, as all true penitents be sure do, cannot but be highly pleased with any assurance, that can be given him, that his sins are pardoned : much more with the greatest he can ever have on this side heaven, even that which is given in the holy sacra-

¹ Psalm xxxviii. 4.

ment, where his pardon is sealed with the blood of Christ, and delivered to him by his officers. Therefore such a one cannot but be always ready for an opportunity of receiving it, and embrace it with all his heart, whensoever it comes ; and it be every day in the week, as the primitive Christians had it, for this very reason, even by their daily sins, as St. Cyprian informs us, *Dom.* But in our age the case is altered. The week is now thought too much. And I deny, but that they, who can live a while together without sin, may not have so many opportunities of receiving it so often. But where shall we find such a man ? not among us, be sure ; we know that we sin in thought, word, or deed, even every day in the week, if not every hour in the day ; therefore, if we have any care of our souls, if we have true sorrow for our sins, if any desire to obtain the pardon of them from the hands of God, we must catch at all opportunities we can of receiving that blessed sacrament, where it is offered to us by Christ himself, and that too upon easy terms that can be imagined : nothing but contrition, penitance and faith in him.

Neither is this all : for we are sensible of our manifold sins, but likewise of the frequency of their occasion, even the corruption of our nature, which is so very much disordered, and so weak, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves, must less to do that which is truly good, but when we would do good, evil is present with us, and spoils all our good intentions, that we every one may say with St. Paul, *For in me, (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no*

For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' But how to perform that which is evil we all find: we all find that very easy and natural to us. Our thoughts are always running after it, our hearts inclined to it; and do what we can by our own strength, some sin or other is apt to get dominion over us, and to reign in our mortal bodies. Yea, though 'we delight (as the same apostle speaks) in the law of God, after the inward man! yet we see another law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bring us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members.' And if we be really concerned, as we ought to be, for the glory of God, and for our own good, this must needs be the greatest trouble we can have in this world, and make us cry out every one, in the bitterness of his soul, as he did, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' But then we may say also, as he doth in the next words, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' He can deliver us, and will too, if we do but apply ourselves aright unto him for it. But for that purpose, there is nothing like to the frequent receiving of his blessed body and blood. Our very preparation for that holy sacrament, by recollecting our sins, by considering what we have deserved, and what our Saviour suffered for them, and by examining our repentance of them, whether it be sincere or no, doth of itself contribute very much to the taking off our affections from them, and to the putting us upon constant endeavours to forsake and avoid them. And so do the impressions also,

¹ Rom. vii. 18, 22, 23, 24, 25.

which the solemn administration of so divine an ordinance makes, and leaves upon our minds afterwards, by setting before us the death, which the Son of God suffered for our sins, and assuring us of pardon if we repent of them. By which means, they who frequently receive this holy sacrament, as suppose every Lord's-day, are always kept upon their guard, between the preparations they make for it, and the impressions that are made upon them by it. Which, if duly observed, must needs meet together, and so give them no time to indulge themselves in any vice or wickedness. For being to receive it upon the Lord's-day, they cannot surely but think of it, and prepare themselves for it, two or three days before; and when they have been there, they cannot but remember what they saw and heard, and did there, at least three or four days after, and so to the time when they are to prepare themselves again for it. Whereby their minds are piously disposed and employed all the week, either about what they did the Sunday before, or what they are to do the Sunday following. Which must needs conduce very much to the arming them against all temptations, to the preventing their falling into any gross sin, and to the keeping them continually in a holy and devout temper.

But that which doth it most effectually of all, is the ghostly strength they receive at the sacrament itself: where, as our church rightly observes and asserts in her catechism, "Our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." Meat and drink, we know, are by God's own appointment, the common supports of human life. Of all meats, bread is reckoned the most strength-

ening. Of all drinks, wine is the most refreshing. Now, as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by these, which are there used as the outward part or sign of the Lord's supper; so are our souls by the thing signified by them, even by the body and blood of Christ, which, as I have shown, are there verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful. It is a great refreshment to our souls, as we have seen already, to have the pardon of our sins sealed and delivered to us, as it is there, in the blood of Christ. And our souls are as much strengthened by the grace of God, which always follows upon his pardon and reconciliation to us, and accompanieth the body and blood of Christ, wheresoever it is. And, therefore, all who duly receive it, do thereby receive it from him, 'and grace for grace,'¹ and so go from strength to strength, till they 'come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'²

Let us hear what he himself saith: 'I am the bread of life,' saith he; 'he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.' 'I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread, that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.' But

¹ John, i. 16.² Eph. iv. 13.

then he adds afterwards, 'it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.'¹ As if he had said, all that I have now spoken, is to be understood in a spiritual sense, and of a spiritual life. I am the life of your souls. It is by my body and my blood that your souls are quickened, nourished, strengthened, and preserved to eternal life.

For this we have Christ's own word, and therefore may be confident, that as it is by him only that we can be regenerate, and born again to a new and spiritual life; so it is by him only, that this new and spiritual life can be maintained and excited in us, so as to put forth and manifest itself in our actions. 'Without him we can do nothing,'² as he himself said. 'But we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us,'³ as his apostle found by experience. But he strengthens none but those who believe in him, and therefore only because they do so. For it is by our believing in him, that we are made members of his body, and so receive strength and nourishment from him, our head. And according as our faith is stronger or weaker, so is the strength we receive from him more or less; and therefore, the holy sacrament being the most sovereign means for the confirming of our faith in him, our souls must needs be very much strengthened and refreshed by it; for we there receive the proper food of our souls, the bread of life, and the water of life, the blessed body and blood of Christ himself. And if his body and blood,

¹ John, vi. 35, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 63.

² John, xv. 5.

³ Phil. iv. 13.

then his Spirit too, which is always with them ; that Holy Spirit which purifies our hearts, which sanctifies our nature, which worketh in us both to will and to do, which strengthens and enables us to overcome the world, to withstand temptations, to mortify our sins, to do our whole duty both to God and man, and so ‘ offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’¹

From hence, therefore, we may see the great advantage, if not the necessity of frequent communion. We all know, that our bodies cannot subsist long, but very few days, without food ; and, why should we think that our souls should do so better than our bodies ? We all find, by daily experience, that our souls are altogether as frail and infirm as our bodies are ; subject to as many distempers, and every way as apt to decay, to grow faint, and feeble, unable to walk at all the narrow path that leads to life, without stumbling, or at least reeling to one side or other, unless they be always kept in good plight, nourished and strengthened with such food as is proper for them. And, certainly, we have as much reason, at least, to take care of our immortal souls, to preserve their life, and health, and vigour, as we have to look after those lumps of clay, which, ere long, must crumble into dust : but as for our bodies, we feed them every day, and that too with the best that we can get for them. And, shall we think once a week too often to feed our souls ? And where shall we get such proper food for them as that which God himself hath provided, even the blessed body and blood of his dear Son ? which is so nourishing, so

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

strengthening, so refreshing to our souls, that the primitive Christians, by the frequent use of it, were able and ready every moment, not only to do, but to suffer cheerfully whatsoever could be laid upon them, even death itself, for the sake of Christ. But the sacrament is the same still as it was then : and if we would use it as constantly as they did, we might live as they lived, and die too, if God should be pleased to honour us so far as to call us to it, for his sake who died for us, and whose death we there commemorate.

Wherefore, as ever we desire to be strong in faith, and zealous for the honour of God ; as we desire to ‘ quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ;’ as we desire to ‘ crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts ;’ as we desire to live above this world, so as not to be ensnared or overpowered by any thing that is in it ; as we desire that the power of Christ should always rest upon us, and enable us to walk ‘ in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless ; in short, as we desire, by his assistance, both to live the life, and to ‘ die the death of the righteous,’ we must often eat this bread, and drink this cup, and bless God for all opportunities that we can get to do it.

These are some of the many arguments and reasons that might be produced for frequent communion. What effect they will have upon those that hear them, I know not ; but fear, that it will be much the same that reason and argument usually have upon the greatest part of mankind ; that is, very little, or none at all. But for my own part, when I seriously consider these things, I cannot but wonder with myself, how it comes to pass, that this holy sacrament, instituted by Christ him-

self, is so much neglected and disused as it is, in a place where his religion is professed and acknowledged to be, as really it is, the only true religion in the world. And after all my search, I can resolve it into nothing else but the degeneracy of the age we live in, and the great decay of that most holy religion among us. I am sure, from the beginning it was not so; for some ages after the establishment of the Christian religion by Christ our Saviour, so long as they who embraced it, gave themselves up to the conduct of that Holy Spirit which he sent down among them, and were inspired by it with true zeal for God, and inflamed with love to their ever-blessed Redeemer, so as to observe all things that he had commanded, whatsoever it cost them; then they never met together upon any day in the week, much less upon the Lord's-day, for the public worship of God, but they all received this holy sacrament, as the principal business they met about, and the most proper Christian service they could perform. And it is very observable, that so long as this continued, men were endued with the extraordinary gifts, as well as the graces of God's Holy Spirit, so as to be able to do many wonderful things by it; yea, and suffer too whatsoever could be inflicted on them for Christ's sake. But in process of time men began to leave off their first love to him, and turn his religion into dispute and controversy; and then, as their piety and devotion grew cooler and cooler, the holy sacrament began to be neglected more and more; and the priests, who administered it, had fewer and fewer to receive it, until at length they had sometimes none at all. But still they understood themselves to be obliged

in duty and conscience to consecrate it and receive it themselves, although they had none to receive it with them. And this mistake, I suppose, gave the first occasion to that multitude of private masses, which have been so much abused in the church of Rome, where the priest commonly receives himself, although he had never a one to communicate with him; and so there can be no communion at all. And as that abuse, so the disuse of the holy sacrament, sprang first from men's coldness and indifferency in religion, which hath prevailed so far in our days, that there are many thousands of persons who are baptized, and live many years in the profession of Christian religion, and yet never received the sacrament of Christ's body and blood in all their lives; and but very few that receive it above once or twice in a year, which is a great reproach and shame to the age we live in, but none at all to the church; for she is always ready to administer it, if people could be persuaded to come to it. But that they cannot, or rather will not be; they have still one pretence or other to excuse themselves, but none that will excuse them before God and their own conscience another day.

What their pretences are, I shall not undertake to determine. They are so many that they cannot easily be numbered; and many of them so vain and trifling, that they are not worth rehearsing. But the bottom of them all is this; men renounced the world, the devil, and the flesh in their baptism, but they are loath to do it in their lives; they then promised to serve God, but now they find something else to do. They have all one sin or other, that reigns over them, and captivates their hearts and affections, so that they cannot endure the

thoughts of parting with it; and they think, as they ought to do, that if they come to the holy sacrament, they must first examine themselves, repent of all their sins, turn to God, renew their baptismal vow, and resolve to lead a new life. But this they are resolved not to do. And if they should come to the sacrament, it would but disturb their quiet, make them uneasy in their minds, and hinder them from enjoying the pleasure they were wont to take in their sins. And for their part, they had rather displease God than themselves, and neglect their duty rather than leave their sins; and so add sin to sin, and 'treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' This is plainly the case of most of those who live in the neglect of this holy commandment. And what can be said to such men? So long as such, they are not fit to come to the communion. And therefore all that can be said to them, is only to beg of them to consider their condition before it be too late, and repent as soon as they can; lest they die, as they have lived, in sin, and so be punished with 'everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.'

But there are others who do receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood sometimes, as, perhaps, two or three times in a year; and my charity prompts me to believe that they would do it oftener, if they thought it to be their duty. But there are some things which at first sight may seem, at least to them, to plead their excuse; and therefore deserve to be duly considered by us. As, first, they say, our church requires them only to receive three times a year; and they do not q

tion, but she would oblige them to receive it oftener, if it were necessary. This is a mistake that a great many have fallen into, and by that means have been kept from the sacrament, more than otherwise they would have been. I call it a mistake, for it is so, and a very great one. For as in all things else, so particularly in this, our church keeps close to the pattern of the apostolic and primitive church : when, as I have before observed, the Lord's supper was administered and received commonly every day in the week, but most constantly upon the Lord's-day. And our church supposeth it to be so still, and therefore hath accordingly made provision for it. Which, that I may fully demonstrate to you, it will be necessary to inquire into the sense and practice of our church in this point, all along from the beginning of the Reformation ; or, to speak more properly, from the time when she was restored to that apostolical form, which she is now of, as she was at first ; which we date from the reign of king Edward VI.

For in the first year of that pious prince, the Liturgy, or Book of Common-prayer, was first compiled ; and in the second, it was settled by act of parliament. In which book it is ordered, that the exhortation to those who are minded to receive the sacrament shall be read : which is there set down, much the same that we read now. But afterwards it is said, "In cathedral churches, or other places, where there is daily communion, it shall be sufficient to read this exhortation above-written once in a month. And in parish-churches upon the week-days it may be left unsaid."¹ Where we may observe, first, that in those days there was daily

¹ Fol. 123.

communion in cathedral churches and other places, as there used to be in the primitive church. And accordingly I find, in the records of St. Paul's, that when the plate, jewels, &c. belonging to the said cathedral, were delivered to the king's commissioners, they, upon the dean and chapter's request, permitted to remain, among other things, "two pair of basons for to bring the communion bread, and to receive the offerings for the poor; whereof one pair silver for every day, the other for festivals, &c. gilt."¹ From whence it is plain, that the communion was then celebrated in that church every day. And so it was even in parish-churches. For otherwise it needed not to be ordered, as it is in the Rubric above mentioned, that in parish-churches, upon the week-days, the said exhortation may be left unsaid. And to the same purpose it is afterwards said, "When the holy communion is celebrated on the work-day, or in private houses, then may be omitted the gloria in excelsis, the creed, the homily, and the exhortation."²

Next, after that we quoted first, this Rubric immediately follows: "and if upon the Sunday or holy day, the people be negligent to come to the communion, then shall the priest earnestly exhort his parishioners to dispose themselves to the receiving of the holy communion more diligently, saying," &c. Which shows, that upon all Sundays and holy days, people then generally received, and the church expected and required it of them. And if any minister found that his parishioners did not always come, at least upon those days, he was to exhort and admonish them to dispose themselves

¹ Dugdal. Hist. of St. Paul's, p. 274.

² Fol. 132.

more diligently for it; and that by the command of the church itself; whereby she hath sufficiently declared her will and desire, that all her members should receive the communion as they did in the primitive times, every day in the week, if possible; and if that could not be, yet at least every Sunday and holy day in the year.

In the Rubric, after the communion-service, there are several things to the same purpose; for it is there ordered, that upon Wednesdays and Fridays, (although there be none to communicate) the priest shall say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration of the Lord's supper, until after the offertory. And then it follows; "and the same order shall be used, whensoever the people be customarily assembled to pray in the church, and none disposed to communicate with the priest."¹ Whereby we are given to understand, that upon what day soever people came to church, the priest was to be ready to celebrate the holy sacrament, if any were disposed to communicate with him. And if there were none, he was to show his readiness, by reading a considerable part of the communion service.

There is another Rubric in the same place, that makes it still plainer. Which I shall transcribe, because the book is not commonly to be had; neither can it be expressed better than in its words: which are these, "also, that the receiving of the sacrament of the blessed body and blood of Christ, may be most agreeable to the institution thereof, and to the usage of the primitive church, in all cathedral and collegiate churches, there shall

¹ Fol. 130.

always some communicate with the priest that ministereth. And that the same may be also observed every where abroad in the country, some one at the least of that house in every parish, to whom by course, after the ordinance herein made, it appertaineth to offer for the charges of the communion; or some other, whom they shall provide to offer for them, shall receive the holy communion with the priest; the which may be the better done, for that they know before when their course cometh, and may therefore dispose themselves to the worthy receiving of the sacrament. And with him or them, who doth so offer the charges of the communion, all other who be then godly disposed thereunto, shall likewise receive the communion. And by this means the minister, having always some to communicate with him, may accordingly solemnize so high and holy mysteries, with all the suffrages and due order appointed for the same. And the priest on the week-day shall forbear to celebrate the communion, except he have some that will communicate with him.

Here we see, what care the church took, that the sacrament might be daily administered, not only in cathedral, but likewise in parish-churches. For which purpose, whereas every parishioner had before been used to find the holy loaf, as it was called, in his course; in the Rubric before this, it is ordained, that every such parishioner shall then in his course communicate, or else get some other person to do it, that so the communion may be duly celebrated; and all there present, that were godly disposed, might partake of it. Which one would have thought as good a provision as could have been made in the case. But notwithstanding

ing, through the obstinacy or carelessness of some, in not making their said offering, as they were commanded, it sometimes failed; as appears from the letter written about a year after by the privy-council, and subscribed by the archbishop of Canterbury and others to the bishops, to assure them, that the king intended to go on with the reformation; wherein, among other things, they say; "and further, whereas it is come to our knowledge, that divers froward and obstinate persons do refuse to pay towards the finding of bread and wine for the holy communion, according to the order prescribed in the said book, by reason whereof the holy communion is many times omitted upon the Sunday; these are to will and command you to convent such obstinate persons before you, and them to admonish and command to keep the order prescribed in the said book. And if any such shall refuse so to do, to punish them by suspension, excommunication, or other censures of the church." From whence we may also learn, how much they were troubled to hear that the holy sacrament was any where omitted, even upon the Sunday, upon any Sunday; how great a fault and scandal they judged it to be, and what care they took to prevent it for the future.

This was the state of this affair at the beginning of the Reformation, and it continues in effect the same to this day. About three or four years after the aforesaid Book of Common Prayer first came out, it was revised, and set forth again with some alterations in the form, but none that were material in the substance of it. Only the former way, of

¹ History of the Reformation, part ii. Coll. p. 192.

the parishioners finding bread and wine for the communion, every one in course, being now found not so effectual as was expected, that was now laid aside, and it was ordered to be provided at the charges of the parish in general, in these words: "The bread and wine for the communion shall be provided by the curate and churchwardens, at the charges of the parish: and the parish shall be discharged of such sums of money, or other duties, which hitherto they have paid for the same, by order of their houses, every Sunday." Where we may take notice, that as hitherto it had been provided every Sunday by the houses of every parish, as they lay in order; it was now to be provided by the minister and churchwardens, at the charges of the whole parish, but still every Sunday, as it was before; which being the most certain way, that could be found out for it, it is still continued. The first part of this Rubric, whereby it is enjoined, being still in force: but the latter part, from these words, "and the parish shall be discharged," &c. is now left out, as it was necessary it should be, after the former course had been disused for above a hundred years.

Now this Book of Common Prayer, which was thus settled by act of Parliament, in the fifth and sixth years of king Edward VI., was that which was afterwards confirmed in the beginning of queen Elizabeth's reign, with one alteration or addition of certain lessons to be used on every Sunday in the year, and the form of the litany altered and corrected, with two sentences only added in the delivery of the sacrament to the communicants. These were all the alterations, that were then made, or indeed that have been ever made since that time to



this, except it be in words or phrases, in the addition of some prayers, and in some such inconsiderable things, as do not at all concern our present purpose. For the care of our church, to have the holy communion constantly celebrated, hath been the same all along, from the time, that the Book of Common Prayer, before spoken of, was first settled. As may be easily proved, from that which was established by the last act of uniformity. Which therefore I shall now briefly consider, so far as it relates to the business in hand, that we may understand the sense of our church at present concerning it.

For this purpose therefore we may first observe, that the communion-service is appointed for the communion itself; and therefore called, the order for the administration of the Lord's supper, or holy communion. Now our church, supposing, or at least hoping, that some of her members will receive this holy communion every day, hath taken care, that this service may be used every day in the week, as appears from the Rubric immediately before the proper lessons, which is this: "Note also, that the collect, epistle, and gospel, appointed for the Sunday, shall serve all the week after, where it is not in this book otherwise ordered." But the collect, epistle, and gospel, are part of the communion-service, for which there is no occasion on the week-days, neither can it be used, except the communion be administered; which therefore is here supposed to be done every day in the week; and so it is also in the celebration of the communion itself, where there are proper prefaces appointed to be used upon certain days. Upon Christmas-day, and seven days after; upon Easter-day, and seven

days after; upon Ascension-day, and seven days after; upon Whit-Sunday, and six days after, (the next day being Trinity-Sunday, which hath one particular to itself.) Now to what purpose are these prefaces appointed to be used seven days together or six, but one of which can be a Sunday, if the sacrament ought not to be administered upon all those days, and so upon week-days as well as Sundays? They are all, as I intimated before, to be used in the actual administration of it, and therefore plainly suppose it to be actually administered upon each of those days, which being for the most part neither Sundays nor holy days, they most evidently demonstrate, that according to the mind and order of our church, as well as the primitive, the Lord's supper ought to be administered every day, that all, who live as they ought in her communion, may be daily partakers of it.

In the rules and orders (which we call the Rubric) after the communion-service, there are several things, that deserve to be considered in this case. It is there ordered, that there shall be no celebration of the communion, except there be a convenient number; that is, four (or three at the least) to communicate with the priest. According to which rule, although the priest have all things ready, and desires to consecrate and receive the holy sacrament himself, yet he must not do it, unless he have such a number to communicate with him, that it may be properly a communion. But, as it is there ordered, "Upon the Sundays, and other holy days (if there be no communion) shall be said all that is appointed at the communion until the end of the general prayer, for the good estate of the catholic church of Christ." Where

we must observe, that the church, as I have shown, appoints the sacrament to be administered every day. But if it so fall out, that there be not in any place a convenient number to communicate with the priest, and by consequence, according to the order before mentioned, no communion ; yet nevertheless, upon Sundays and other holy days, so much of the communion-service shall be said, as is there limited. Why only upon Sundays and holy days, but to distinguish them from other days, on which, if there be a sufficient number of communicants, the whole communion service is to be used ; but no part of it, except there be so ; but upon Sundays and holy days, although there be not such a number, and therefore no communion ; yet however, the priest shall go up to the altar, and there read all that is appointed to be said at the communion, until the end of the prayer for Christ's catholic church : whereby the people may see, that neither he, nor the church is to be blamed, if the holy sacrament be not then administered. Forasmuch as he is there ready by the order of the church to do it, and goes, as far as he can, in the service appointed for it, without the actual administration of it ; and therefore that the fault is wholly in themselves, that it is not actually administered, because they will not make up a convenient number among them to communicate with him : which is a most excellent order ; for the people hereby have not only God's holy commandments solemnly proclaimed, the epistle and gospel for the day, the Nicene creed, and prayers proper for that occasion, read to them ; but they are likewise put in mind of their duty to their Saviour, in receiving his most blessed body and blood, and upbraided with their

neglect of it. For which purposes also, I think it very expedient, that the order of the church for the reading that part of the service at the communion-table, even when there is no communion, be duly observed.

The next Rubric, in the same place, that concerns our present business, is this: "And in all cathedral and collegiate churches and colleges, where there are many priests and deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary." Where we see, that the church doth not command, but supposes that the sacrament is constantly administered in all such places; taking it for granted, that it is never omitted there, where there are so many persons devoted to the service of God, but that there is always a sufficient number to communicate. But she absolutely commands, that all priests and deacons, that belong to such foundations, shall receive the communion with the priest every Sunday at the least, except any of them have a reasonable cause to the contrary (which the ordinary of the place, I suppose, is to be judge of.) They are bound therefore, all and every one of them, to receive it every Sunday among them. Wherefore, if there be any such places where it is not so administered, or any such persons, who do not, without just cause to the contrary, receive it every Sunday in the year, I do not see how they can answer it to God, to the church, or to their own consciences. Neither are they bound to receive it only every Sunday, but every Sunday at the least. Which plainly supposeth that it is administered upon other days as well as Sundays; for otherwise they could not receive it

oftener, if they would. And it is to be hoped that all such persons receive it as often as it is administered among them. But the church expressly requires them to receive it at least upon that day, except they have a reasonable, or such a cause to the contrary, as will justify their omission of it before the church, and Christ himself at the last day. These things being thus briefly explained, we shall easily see into the meaning of the words, that gave us the occasion to discourse of them, which are these, in the place last quoted. And note, "that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one." From whence some have been tempted to think that the church doth not look upon as necessary that they should communicate above thrice a year. I say tempted to think so; for no man, surely, in his right wits, can of himself draw such an inference from these words, which is so directly contrary to the sense of the church, and hath no foundation at all in the words themselves. For the church, as I have shown, hath taken all the care she can, that the holy sacrament should be every where administered, if it was possible, every day, at least every Sunday and holy day in the year; which she would never have done, if she had thought it sufficient for any one to receive only thrice a year; for then, all her care about the frequent administration of it would be in vain, and to no purpose. And besides, she hath drawn up an excellent exhortation to be read by the minister of every parish, in case he sees the people negligent to come to the holy communion, beginning thus: "Dearly beloved, on ——— I intend, by God's grace, to celebrate the Lord's supper." Where we may ob-

serve, that it is not said on such a Sunday, but on ——— with a blank, to show that the minister may appoint the communion on any day of the week, when he can have a sufficient number to communicate with him; and so it is in the other exhortation; only there is day put in, which may be understood of Tuesday or Wednesday, or any other day, as well as Sunday, for the same reason. In that first mentioned, the minister, in the words, and by the order of the church, invites all there present, and beseecheth them for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to come to the Lord's supper. And among other things, he saith to them all, "I bid you in the name of God, I call you in Christ's behalf, I exhort you, as you love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy communion." There are several such pathological expressions in that exhortation, wherewith the church most earnestly exhorteth, adviseth, admonisheth, all persons to come to this holy sacrament. And this exhortation every minister is to read publicly before all his congregation, whensoever he sees them negligent to come to it; as all are, who come but two or three times a year, where they may have it oftener, if they will. They plainly live in the neglect of it, and therefore ought to have this exhortation read to them, according to the order of the church; whereby she hath sufficiently demonstrated, that she doth not think it enough for people generally to receive it only three times in a year; but that it is her opinion that they ought, and her hearty desire that they would receive it as often as it is, or, according to her order, ought to be administered among them.

But then she wisely considers withal, that be-

ing a national church, made up of all sorts of persons, it is necessary that her general rules and orders should be accommodated, as much as possible, to the several conditions and circumstances that many of them may be sometimes in. And therefore, although she exhorts all her members to frequent and constant communion; yet she doth not think fit to command and oblige them all, under the pain of excommunication, to receive oftener than three times a year, lest some might be thereby tempted to come sometimes without that preparation and disposition of mind that is requisite to the worthy partaking of so great a mystery. I say, under pain of excommunication; for that is the meaning and effect of this law, that they who do not communicate at least three times in a year, may and ought to be cast out of the communion of Christ's church, as no longer fit to be called Christians, seeing they live in such a gross neglect of Christ's own command, and of that duty, whereby Christians are in an especial manner distinguished from other men. Other men, as Jews, Turks, and heathens, may fast and pray, and hear sermons, in their way; but to receive the sacrament of Christ's supper is proper and peculiar only to Christians, or such as profess that religion which Jesus Christ hath settled in the world. And therefore those who receive the sacrament, do thereby manifest themselves to be Christians: they who do it not, make it at least doubtful whether they be Christians or no; for although they were baptized, and so made Christians once, who knows whether they have not renounced their baptism, and apostatized from the Christian religion? They themselves, perhaps, may profess they have not; but the

church can never know it, but hath just cause to suspect the contrary, so long as they refuse to renew the vow they made in the sacrament of baptism, by receiving that of the Lord's supper. And the least that can be required of them for that purpose, is to do it three times a year; which therefore the church absolutely requires. Not that it is not necessary for them to receive it oftener, in order to their salvation; but because it is necessary they should do it at least so often, that the church may be satisfied that they continue in her communion, and constant to that religion wherein alone salvation can be had.

And hence it is, that in the rule itself it is not said, that every person, but every parishioner, shall communicate at the least three times in the year; which therefore is required of all, not as they are members only of the catholic church, but as they are members of a parochial church, and they are bound by this law to do it, at least, so often in their own parish-church, where they are parishioners: otherwise they do not do it as parishioners, as the law requires. So that although a man communicates a hundred times in any other place; as in the cathedral, which is free to all of the diocess; or in a chapel of ease, or in any other church, when he can have it at his own, this doth not satisfy the law. But he must communicate, at least, three times in the year, as a parishioner, in his own parish-church, where there are officers, called churchwardens, appointed on purpose to take notice of it, and to inform the church against him, if he neglect to do it so often as she requires; that she may use the most effectual means to bring him to repentance for his sin, and to make him

more careful for the future to perform so great and necessary a duty as this is ; or, if he continue obstinate, cut him off from the body of Christ, as no longer worthy to be called a member it. And therefore all that can be reasonably inferred from this law is, that the church doth not think them fit to communicate at all, who will not communicate at least three times in the year. But as for her opinion of the necessity of communicating oftener, in order to men's attaining eternal salvation by the blood of Christ, that she hath sufficiently declared, by the great care she hath taken, to have this holy sacrament administered constantly, as often as it was in the apostles' and primitive time of Christianity ; that is, as often as any Christian can desire to have it. For according to the order and discipline of our church, if a sufficient number of parishioners against whom there is no just exception, desire to receive it every Sunday, or every day in the year, the minister of their parish not only may, but, as I humbly conceive, is bound to consecrate and administer it to them. The want of such a number being, as far as I can perceive, the only reason that can ever justify the omission of it.

I have endeavoured to set this matter in as clear a light as I could, because it will discover to us several things very observable concerning the church we live in ; for hereby we see how exactly she follows the pattern of the primitive and apostolic church in this particular, as well as others : what great care she hath taken, that the bread and water of life may be duly distributed to all her members, whensoever they hunger and thirst after it. With how great prudence she hath so ordered it, that all may have it as often as they will, and yet none

compelled to receive it oftener than is absolutely necessary, in order to their manifesting themselves to continue in the faith of Christ. How desirous she is that all would receive it constantly, and yet how careful that none may receive it unworthily. How uniform she hath been in her orders about it all along ; and by consequence what cause we all have to bless God, that we live in the communion of such a church ; and how much it behoves us to receive the holy communion of her, not only as often as she strictly commands all to receive it under the pain of excommunication, but as often as she adviseth and exhorteth us to do it, in order to our eternal salvation, and as she is ready and desirous to communicate it to us ; and then we should be sure to receive it as often as we are bound, either in duty to God, or by our own interest to do it.

Another reason why many do not oftener eat this bread, and drink this cup, is, because, as they pretend, they dare not, for fear of sinning against God, and incurring eternal damnation by it. For the apostle, in this very place, saith, ‘ Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.’ And ‘ he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’¹ But they cannot but acknowledge themselves to be unworthy of it : and if they should do it often, they might sometimes do it unworthily, and so might hazard their salvation by it, This is a mistake that many have lain under, and therefore it will be worth our while

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.

to lay it as open as we can, that people may see into the vanity and falsehood of it.

First, therefore, if there be any force in this argument against frequent communion, it holds as well against ever communicating at all. For if every unworthy person that presumes to 'eat this bread, and drink this cup,' and every one that doth it any way unworthily, is thereby rendered obnoxious to eternal damnation, then all would be so that ever eat and drink it at all; forasmuch as no man is worthy of any, much less of so great a mercy as that is; neither can any man do any, much less so great a work as that is, every way so exactly as he ought. And therefore no man, according to this opinion, can ever obey this command of his Saviour, without running the hazard of losing his salvation by it: which is such a groundless and vain conceit, that I wonder how it first came into any man's head. For it is the same as to imagine, that he who came into the world on purpose to save us, should require us to do that in order to our salvation, which we can never do without being damned. Which is so absurd, that whatsoever is, this be sure, cannot be the apostle's meaning in those words.

Neither, indeed, can the words themselves bear any such sense, without plain force and violence put upon them. For the apostle doth not here speak of the unworthiness of the person, but of the action. He doth not say, if any unworthy person shall eat this bread, and drink this cup; for all are unworthy, and they usually the most, who think themselves the least; and they least, who think themselves the most unworthy; but he saith, 'He that eateth or drinketh unworthily,' or after an unworthy manner,

unbecoming so great and sacred a duty, as that is. And what this unworthy manner of receiving the holy sacrament was, which he here speaks of, appears plainly from the context. He is here reproofing the Corinthians for some disorders that were among them, and particularly in the celebration of the Lord's supper. 'For first of all,' saith he, 'when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.' It seems, there were divisions among them, not only in other places, but in the church itself; not at other times only, but likewise when they were receiving the holy communion itself; and then he adds, 'When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper; for, in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not, or are poor?'¹ Where we may observe, that they came together, as I have observed before, to eat the Lord's supper; that was the end, as they pretended, of their meeting; but as they ordered the business, they did not do it; they did not eat the Lord's supper, but their own. Some eat but little, so as to be still hungry; others eat and drank so much as to be drunken, and that in the church itself. For that they eat their own supper there, appears from the apostle's calling it their own, and not the Lord's supper; and also from his saying in the next verse, 'What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, making as if that was but like one

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 8, 20, 21, 22.

of your own houses, where you eat and drink every day ?' And lastly, from the direction he afterwards gives them how to amend this fault, saying, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another ; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation or judgment.'¹ This, therefore, is the thing which the apostle here condemns. They had got, it seems, a wicked custom among them, to bring their own ordinary food to the church, and to eat and drink it there. And because they did it in the church, they looked upon it as the Lord's supper ; or at least, eat that there no otherwise than they used to eat their own at home ; without showing any respect to Christ's mystical body and blood, or making any difference between his supper and their own ; but only that they eat the one in the church, and the other at their own houses ; which was a great mistake and fault ; for which the apostle meekly reproves them, saying, 'What shall I say to you ? Shall I praise you in this ? I praise you not.'² And then he gives them the reason why he could not praise, but blame them for it : even because the Lord's supper was instituted by the Lord Christ himself, to keep up the remembrance of himself in the church ; to their ignorance of which, he in great charity imputes their fault. Not doubting, but if they had known the nature and end of that holy sacrament, they would have set a greater value upon it ; and therefore, perceiving that they did not rightly understand what he had before delivered to them about it, he fully declares it again to them, saying, 'For I have received of

¹ Ver. 33, 34.² Verse 22.

the Lord, &c.' After 'which, having acquainted them in my text, how this is done in remembrance of Christ, even by showing forth his death, he draws this inference from it: 'Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.'¹ Which, therefore, must needs be understood of that unworthy manner of doing it, which he before spoke of, and which gave him the occasion of saying it; even their 'eating this bread, and drinking this cup of the Lord,' after the same manner as they eat and drank at home, without expressing any reverence to the holy sacrament, or to Christ's body and blood there represented. And therefore he saith, that whosoever doth so, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, he is guilty of profaning Christ's mystical body and blood, crucifying, as it were, to himself, 'the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame,'² by eating his body, and drinking his blood as common things, and so exposing him to contempt and scorn.

That this is the true meaning of the phrase, appears also from the next verse but one, where it occurs again: 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'³ Not discerning; that is, not considering whose body it is; nor making any difference between that and their ordinary food: as the original word *διακρίνων* plainly imports. This, therefore, is that unworthy receiving which the apostle here particularly condemneth; when men come to the Lord's table, and

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 23—27.² Heb vi. 6.³ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

receive the outward signs of bread and wine, without discerning by faith the Lord's body signified by them; and therefore, without showing any more regard and reverence to what they eat and drink there, than they do to any other meat and drink. Which horrid sin, although the Corinthians fell into it before they fully understood the nature and end of Christ's institution; yet I hope few are guilty of it among us, now that the institution of this holy sacrament is so clearly delivered and explained by the apostle in this place. They seem to come nearest to it, who sit at the Lord's table as they do at their own, and receive Christ's body and blood with no more reverence and godly fear than they eat and drink at home.

But that which hath frightened people most from this sacrament, is the apostle's saying, according to our translation, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.'¹ And I confess, at first sight it looks very frightful; for it seems to imply, that whosoever receiveth the holy sacrament after any unworthy manner, or any otherwise than he ought, is, *ipso facto*, damned, or adjudged to eternal punishments for it. Which, if true, would discourage all considering persons from ever receiving at all, unless they have greater assurance of their own worthiness and abilities than can reasonably be expected in this life, or justly pretended to by any that know themselves. But our comfort is, this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words. For, besides that no man can receive it so worthily as he ought, and every unworthy receiving, as I have

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

shown, is not that which the apostle here speaks of. Besides that, I say, the word *κρίμα*, which is translated damnation in the text, in the margin of our Bibles is rendered judgment; which shows that our translators themselves were not satisfied that the word here signified damnation, but that it might be taken in the other sense. But howsoever, they put damnation into the text, to make people, I suppose, the more careful how they received, not foreseeing that ill uses might be made of it, and accordingly have been so in our age; wherein, through the ignorance or indiscretion of some persons, this one word hath kept more people from the holy communion, than all the commandments for it can bring to it. Not in itself, or from its own proper meaning; but by reason of the harsh sound it makes in our ears, who commonly use it for damnation to eternal punishment; whereas it may be applied as well to those which are only temporal; and it must be here. The original word *κρίμα* signifies judgment in general, whereby a man is adjudged to any sort of punishment. But what that is in particular, must be determined from the circumstances of the place where it is used; and in this place, the apostle himself plainly shows what kind of judgment or damnation he means by it. For having said, ‘He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation,’ or judgment, ‘to himself;’ he immediately adds, ‘For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.’¹ From whence it is easy to suppose that some epidemical distemper at that time raged at Corinth, particularly among the Chris-

¹ Ib. verse 30.

tians, of which many died; and others, though they escaped death, yet continued weak and sickly for some time after. This the apostle ascribes to the judgment of God upon them, for their unworthy and profane eating and drinking Christ's mystical body and blood, as if it had been common food. 'For this cause,' saith he, 'many are weak and sickly among you,' &c. And therefore this must needs be the judgment which he here means. But this is so far from eternal damnation, that it is usually inflicted on purpose to prevent that. And that it was so at this time, appears from what follows: 'For,' saith he, 'if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.'¹ This was the end of that, as it is of all the judgments which God lays upon his people, even to bring them thereby to such a sight and sense of their sins, and to such a hearty and sincere repentance, that they may not be condemned for them. And therefore when the apostle saith, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself;' and again afterwards, 'If any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation,'² where the same word is used again in the original; neither the etymology, nor common use of the word in other places, much less will the context here, suffer it to be understood of eternal damnation, but rather of such temporal judgments, which are designed by Almighty God to keep us from being condemned with the wicked and impenitent world.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.

² Verse 34.

Thus we see in short, the whole scope and design of the apostle in this remarkable passage concerning the holy sacrament; from whence we may easily observe, that all that can be reasonably inferred from what he here saith, is, that as it is a sin not to pray, or fast, or give alms, or hear God's word aright; so it is a sin too not to receive the Lord's supper aright, or as we ought to do it. But as we must 'take heed how we hear,'¹ so we must take heed how we receive, that we may do it with that faith and reverence which becomes so divine an institution, and so heavenly a duty as that is, lest otherwise we offend God, and provoke him to lay some heavy judgment upon us; and, except we repent, condemn us at last to everlasting fire, as he justly may for any sin that we stand guilty of before him. But it is a great affront and abuse put upon God's holy word, to make this an excuse for our not frequenting the holy communion, when the apostle designed it only for an argument why we should receive it always in a worthy and decent manner. And therefore this is the great and only use we should make of it, that seeing 'he that eateth this bread, and drinketh this cup' of the Lord 'unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body;' therefore as oft as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we must take care to do it 'worthily, discerning the Lord's body,' and deporting ourselves accordingly in receiving of it. Whosoever we are invited to this spiritual wedding, we must be sure to come; but we must be sure to come with our wedding-garment on, with such a temper and

¹ Luke, viii. 18.

disposition of mind as becomes the place, the company, and the feast we go to. For which purpose we must prepare ourselves beforehand, and put our hearts into such a frame, that we may so feed upon the blessed body and blood of Christ our Saviour, that he may preserve both our souls and bodies to eternal life. But then you will say, perhaps, this requires a great deal of time more than we can often spare from our necessary employments: and that is the reason that we do not receive so often as we otherwise would.

And I believe so too. That is the reason, the great reason of all, that this holy sacrament is so shamefully neglected by most people! They know it is a very good thing, and they would oftener partake of it, but that they have other business of greater consequence, as they wisely think, to mind; so that they cannot find time enough to prepare themselves as they ought for it. As in the parable, when a certain man had made a great supper, and sent his servants to call those which he had invited to it, they all presently began to make excuse: 'The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'¹ So it is to this day: Christ, the eternal Son of God, at the expense of his own blood, hath provided a supper, his own last supper, the best feast that can be had on this side heaven; and all things being ready, he sends his ministers to invite all that are admitted into his

¹ Luke, xiv. 18, 19, 20.

church, to come and partake of it. But they all, or at least the far greatest part, desire to be excused. And, if we would know the reason, it is because they have other business to do : one hath his farm to look after, another his shop, a third his warehouse and merchandize. And so every one finds something or other to do ; any thing rather than come to the Lord's supper. But these are but vain excuses, like those in the parable, designed on purpose to show the folly of those which made them. The first had bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it ; wherein he betrayed his folly, in buying that which he had not seen : and so did the second, in buying five yoke of oxen before he had proved them, to know whether they were fit for his turn. But the greatest fool of all was the last, who said, ' I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come : ' as if his marrying a wife could hinder him from coming to a feast. Such are the excuses that men commonly make for their not coming when they are invited to our Lord's table ; they serve only to discover the weakness and folly of those which make them. For how can a man betray the weakness of judgment more than by preferring the most inconsiderable, before the most valuable things that are ? Yet this is the case of all, who at any time neglect the holy communion for any worldly business. They prefer their bodies before their souls ; the world, before their Saviour ; earth, with all its vanities and troubles, before heaven, and all the glory that he is there preparing for all those who keep his commandments ; for otherwise they would never suffer any thing in this world to hinder them from doing what he hath commanded, for

their more effectual obtaining eternal salvation by him.

But this being the most common objection against frequent communion, let us look a little more narrowly into it, that we may see what cause men have to make it. First, some have none at all. Yea, there are many such : many, who are not encumbered with the affairs of this life, having a sufficient maintenance transmitted to them from their ancestors, or else acquired already, by God's blessings upon their own endeavours, whereby they are able to support themselves and their families, without taking any further care about it. I do not question, but there are many such here present at this time. Now, what can you plead for your not frequenting the holy sacrament ? You cannot say, ye have not time to prepare yourselves ; for you have more upon your hands than you well know what to do with. And, therefore, are often forced to invent ways how to spend it, which usually are as bad as to sit still, and do nothing. And is it not a sad thing, that you should choose to do nothing, or worse than nothing, rather than that which God himself set you, and hath given so much time, on purpose that nothing might divert you from it ? Remember, the time will come when time will be no more ! And then you will wish with all your hearts, that you had employed it better while you had it. And, I am sure, there is no way possible for you to make better advantage of it, than by spending it in preparing yourselves for the holy communion, and then receiving it accordingly. This being the best course you can ever take, for your employing, not only that, but all

the rest of your time well. Whereas, if you still continue to neglect so great a duty, notwithstanding that you have little or nothing else to do in the meanwhile, for my part, I know not how you can answer it, either to God, or your own consciences ; nor what account you can give, either of yourselves or of your time, at the last day. But this I know, that you have but too much cause to suspect and fear, that all is not right within you : that whatsoever your temporal estate may seem, your spiritual is very bad ; and that all the ease and plenty which you now enjoy, will hereafter serve to no other purpose than to increase your pain and misery.

But there are others, who really have a great deal of worldly business upon their hands, more perhaps, than they can well turn them to. But I would desire such to consider, that whatever worldly business they have, it is still but the business of this world, this transient and uncertain world, that soon passeth away : that they have another world to live in as well as this ; a world that will have no end. And if they take so much care and pains about their living a few years, or, perhaps, a few days upon earth, they ought surely to be much more careful how to live eternally ; as they must, either in heaven or hell, either in the greatest pleasure they can enjoy, or else in the greatest pain they can endure. The difference betwixt which two is so vastly great, that whosoever duly weighs and considers it, must needs be inclined to make it his chief study and business in this world, to prepare for the next : ‘ to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness’ in the first place, as our Saviour himself commands.¹ And he who doth that, will be sure

¹ Matt. vi. 33.

to order all his temporal affairs so, that they shall never interfere with his spiritual, but give place to them upon all occasions. Although he be diligent and industrious in his calling ; yet, if things so fall out, that he must either neglect that for a while, or else his daily prayers, he doth not stand pausing which he had best to do, as seeing there is no comparison at all between them ; the one having respect only to this present, the other to his future and eternal state. And so for the holy sacrament, if he have an opportunity put into his hands of receiving that, he dares not let it slip upon any worldly account whatsoever ; as knowing that he may get more there than all this world is worth ; and lose more by the neglect of that, than of any other opportunity that can be offered him.

This is the sense and practice of every wise and good man in this case ; but as for such, whose heads and hearts, as well as hands, are so taken up with worldly business, that they cannot, or rather will not, spare so much time from that, as to prepare themselves for the holy communion ; they plainly show, that they prefer the things of this life, before their duty to God ; their bodies before their souls ; and their temporal, before their eternal happiness and welfare. These are the men of this world, who have, or at least desire to have, their portion in this life, rather than the next. And these are they which St. Paul speaks of, where he saith, ‘ Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly ; whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.’¹ I wish there were

¹ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

none such among us at this time; if there be, it will be in vain to say much to them, their hearts being so full of this world, that there is no room left for sober and good advice. And therefore I shall only desire, that when they are at leisure, they would remember our Saviour's words: 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'¹

But some of those who thus live in a crowd of cares for this present life, may notwithstanding sometimes think of their future state, and then they resolve to set upon the use of these means which God hath appointed for their salvation, and particularly the greatest of all, the holy sacrament, at least, when their hurry of business is over, which they hope may be in a week or fortnight's time, but in the meanwhile they desire to be excused.

Let us suppose that you are so resolved at present; but are you sure that those resolutions will hold, and that you will be in the same mind a fortnight hence that you are now in? How do you know but other business may come in before that, which may distract your thoughts, as much, or more, than that ye have now upon you? But above all, what assurance have ye, that ye shall live so long? And what if ye should die, as ye may, before that time? What do ye think will then become of you? If ye cannot fit yourselves for the holy sacrament, will ye be fit to die? No, surely! If you be not prepared to appear before Christ at his holy table, you will be much less prepared to appear before him at his judgment-seat,

¹ Matt. xvi. 26.

where you will receive your final and irrevocable sentence from him. And therefore you had need to look about you, and to be always ready, as Christ himself requires you to be, with his own mouth, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.'¹ Whence you may observe, that he who will be your judge, hath forewarned you, that the cares of this life, will make you as unfit to appear before him, as surfeiting and drunkenness itself. And therefore, if you have any care of your souls, take heed of the cares of this life, that they hinder you no longer from receiving his most blessed body and blood as often as you can; for if they do, they will much hinder you from giving a good account of yourselves before his tribunal. But as ye desire to be always ready for death and judgment, be always ready for that holy sacrament, which is the best preparatory in the world for it. And for that purpose, whensoever ye are invited to our Lord's table, think thus with yourselves: I have now an opportunity put into my hands, of partaking of the body and blood of my ever-blessed Saviour, to preserve my body and soul to everlasting life. It is true, I have, at this time, more than ordinary business upon my hand; but, what is all this world, in comparison of everlasting life and happiness? And who knows, whether I shall ever have such another opportunity as this, as long as I live? Do but, I say, think thus, and then let slip any opportunity, if you can: for my part, if ye have any regard for your im-

¹ Luke, xxi. 34.

mortal souls, I believe it will be very difficult, if not impossible.

But that which deserves most to be considered in this case, is the preparation that is necessarily required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper. Concerning which, many whole books have been written, and some so large, that the very reading of them requires more time than a good Christian need spend in the duty itself. And this, I believe, hath discouraged many from receiving the holy sacrament, so often as they ought, and as they otherwise would. For meeting with such books as make the preparation so tedious and troublesome, that they cannot read and observe all that is there said about it, without laying aside all other business for a long time together, they are quite disheartened from ever attempting it, but when they can find a time wherein they have nothing else to do ; which, to those who follow any calling, as they ought, happens but very rarely : who, therefore, very rarely so much as think of it, especially if they chance to meet with such books, as they sometimes may do, which make their preparation so nice and ticklish a thing, that they despair of ever observing all the little rules which are there laid down ; and, therefore, seldom or never trouble their heads about it : which shows what great care and caution should be used in treating upon this subject, lest we raise such scruples and difficulties in it, which may deter men from the holy sacrament, instead of preparing them for it. For my own part, I do not see but that whatsoever is generally necessary in order to it, may be brought within a small compass ; for it may be all reduced to these few heads :

First, to the receiving the Lord's supper aright, it is necessary that we be rightly instructed in the nature and end of it, that we may be able to discern, as the apostle speaks, the Lord's body, or understand the difference between that and our ordinary food ; and so know what we do ; without which, it is impossible for us to do it as we ought. But for this purpose, we need not run over great volumes ; for we have every thing necessary to be known concerning it, briefly, but fully set down in our church catechism ; so briefly, that a child may learn it all ; and yet so fully, that the greatest scholar upon earth need know no more, in order to his worthy receiving this holy sacrament ; for there we have the end why it was ordained, even, " for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." There we have both the parts of it described and explained to us, that the " bread and wine which the Lord commanded to be received, is the outward part, or sign of the Lord's supper ;" and that the " inward part," or, " thing signified, is the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper." There we have also, the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby, even the " strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." In which few words, we have all things necessary to be known concerning this holy sacrament, in order to the worthy receiving of it : and they are all so plain and easy, that we cannot suppose that any one, who is bred up in the Christian religion, and is come to the years of discretion, can be ignorant of them. And if any be, it is but turning to

the catechism in their Common-prayer Book, and there they may find them. As they may all things else that are requisite for them, either to know, or believe, or do, or desire, that they may be saved.

In the next place, as in all other addresses to almighty God, so especially in this, we ought certainly to endeavour all we can, to prepare ourselves beforehand for it. For which purpose, the apostle lays down this general rule, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.'¹ But he doth not tell us particularly what we should examine ourselves about, because that may be easily gathered from what he there saith concerning the sacrament itself, and the manner of receiving it. But lest we should be mistaken in it, our church hath taken care to give us particular directions about it, in the last words of her catechism, where she tells us, that it is required of them who come to the Lord's supper, "to examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men." Which words are so plain, that they cannot be made plainer; and yet so full, that they contain all that can be truly and pertinently said on this subject. If ye read all the books that have been written, and all the directions that are there given about your preparation to the Lord's supper, you will find a great many more words; but all that are to the purpose, amount to no more than what is here said. I do not deny, but that the reading

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 28.

of such, or any other books of devotions that are written with that care and prudence which the subject requires, may be a good help to bring your minds into a fit temper and disposition for the blessed sacrament. But still this is the sum and substance of all that you need to do in order to it, even to set apart some time beforehand, wherein to examine yourselves, whether you truly repent of your former sins, so as steadfastly to purpose for the future to lead a new life : whether you have a lively faith in God's mercies through Christ, joined with a thankful remembrance of his death ; and whether ye be in charity with all men. And if, upon due examination, ye find that ye have such repentance, such faith, and such charity, as this is, which, be sure, all true Christians have, you need not doubt but that you are fit to receive the holy sacrament, and ought accordingly to do it. But that ye may be more fully assured of it, especially at the time of receiving, the church itself is pleased to tell you it in the exhortation at the same time, saying, "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord : repent you truly for your sins past, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men. So shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." And therefore, she afterwards invites all that are so prepared, "to draw near with faith, and to receive the holy sacrament to their comfort."

This therefore, is all that is necessarily required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper. But all this may be easily done by any true Christian. It requires no great parts, or learning, nor time neither, for a man to look into his own heart,

to review his life, to consider wherein he hath hitherto done amiss, and to resolve, by God's blessing, to do so no more, but to endeavour all he can to lead, for the future, a new and holy life, as becomes the gospel of Christ. This is no more than what many do every day, or at least very often, whether they are to receive the holy sacrament or no : and so are always ready, whensoever they can get an opportunity to receive it ; especially, if they have been long accustomed to it. For by this means, their repentance, faith, charity, and all other graces, being kept in continual exercise, and receiving strength and nourishment from the body and blood of Christ frequently communicated unto them, they, by degrees, grow up into habit and custom, so as to be ready, upon all occasions, to exert and put forth themselves with ease and pleasure. And therefore, such happy persons need not spend much time in their actual preparation for the holy communion, as having such an habitual disposition, whereby they are always duly qualified and prepared for it. Insomuch, that if they happen to come into a place where it is administered, although they did not know or think of it before they came, yet they can receive the benefit and comfort of it, and bless God for giving them such an opportunity, which they did not look for ; but being put into their hands, they cannot but take hold of it, and improve it to their best advantage.

These, I confess, may seem to be of the higher rank of Christians, to which few ascend in the ordinary way, without more than ordinary care and diligence in the use of those means, which, by the grace of God accompanying them, lead up to it.

But we must not think, as some have done, that none but such as these should receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper: for that was intended for all that believe in Christ, and are baptized in his name: yea, they are all commanded to do this in remembrance of him, one as well as another, the weak as well as the strong in faith. The weak, that they may be strong; and the strong, that they may not be weak again, but rather grow stronger and stronger, till they 'come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'¹ I know there are many ignorant, though, perhaps, well-meaning persons among us; yea, and some who pretend to great knowledge in the mysteries of our religion, who yet think that none but great men and eminent saints should come to the holy sacrament; they who have attained already to such an excellent and divine temper of mind, as to live always above this world, and out of the reach of the devil and his temptations: but as for others, who are conscious to themselves of their daily infirmities, and are often in danger of being overpowered by one temptation or other; they must by no means venture upon it. But this is certainly a very great and dangerous mistake, and one of the devil's tricks, to keep men off from using the best weapons, whereby to resist and conquer him: for all Christ's disciples are equally bound by his command to do this in remembrance of him. And all have equally need of it. If any want it more than others, it must be such whose faith is so weak as not to be able as yet to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, but are

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

still wrestling and fighting with these their spiritual enemies; and therefore have need of all the aids and assistances which the Captain of our salvation hath provided in that case: of which, the receiving his most blessed body and blood was always found to be the most powerful and prevalent.

But that it may be so to them, it is necessary that such persons take pains in preparing themselves for it. They must look back upon their lives, and bring to their remembrance as many as they can of their former sins, especially such as they have been most guilty of, and whereby they have most offended and dishonoured Almighty God; and must not only abhor, and humble themselves for them, but also resolve never to commit them any more. They must search narrowly into their own hearts, to find out the weakest side, and resolve to set a stronger watch and guard than they used to do about it. They must bethink themselves what sort of temptations they have been most subject to, and oftenest overcome by; and must resolve never to give way to them any more, but to withstand them with all their might. They must consider what place, what company, what employment, what recreations, or other circumstances of their life, have exposed them most to such temptations, and have been the chief occasions of their falling into sin, and must resolve for the future to forsake and avoid them. They must consult their own breasts, to know how they have performed their duties to God, and used the means that he had appointed for their obtaining grace at his hands; how they have fasted and watched; how they have prayed, both in public and private;

how they have read and heard God's holy word; and how they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper; whether they have lived in the neglect of some or other of these necessary duties, or else performed them in a careless and superficial manner; and must resolve to become constant, and more hearty and sincere in all and every one of them, than hitherto they have been. They must examine themselves whether they be in charity and in the faith; whether they really believe all the articles of the Christian religion, and have a sure trust and confidence in Christ their Saviour, and in all the promises which God hath made to mankind in him, and must resolve to continue firm and steadfast in the same unto the end. And they must make all these holy resolutions not in their own, but in the name of Jesus Christ, believing and depending upon him for grace and power to perform them, so as to live accordingly, for the future, all the rest of their days. In short, they must call to mind the solemn vow and promise which they made to God when they were admitted into his church by the sacrament of baptism; and must now renew and ratify the same at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, faithfully promising again to him, and purposing with themselves, by his assistance, "to believe and do as they then promised, and to continue in the same unto their lives' end."

They who have thus prepared themselves for the Lord's supper, whensoever it is administered, may and ought most thankfully to receive it, not doubting but they shall find favour and acceptance with God, and great benefit and advantage to themselves by it, through his merits and intercession, whose body and blood they there receive. And

yet all this may be easily and soon done by any of Christ's disciples; by those of the lowest as well as of the highest forms in the school. Yea, it ought to be often done by all at other times, as well as when they are to receive the holy communion. It is true, it is in a particular manner requisite and necessary, that a man examine himself before he 'eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;' because, unless a man first knows the true state of his soul, he will not know how to make a right use of what he there receives to his spiritual advantage. The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is an universal remedy for all the distempers of our souls; but except a man knows where his distemper lies, and what part is most affected, he cannot apply the medicine to it, and so can receive no benefit from it. But howsoever, we must not think that self-examination is a duty to be performed only upon that occasion. For he who never examines himself but only when he is to receive the holy sacrament, had need to receive it very often, or else he will be a great stranger to himself, not knowing what condition he is in, nor what progress he makes in the way to heaven; but rather will have just cause to suspect that he goes backward, and grows worse and worse every day. And therefore he who is really solicitous about his future state, as all true Christians be sure are, cannot but often reflect upon himself, and upon his present condition, although he have not an opportunity of partaking of Christ's body and blood, as yet, to make it better. And if he lives in a place, as many do, where such opportunities are seldom to be had, he must, notwithstanding, often call himself to an account, look into the state of his soul, and settle all his spiritual

affairs, as solemnly as if he was to receive the holy sacrament immediately upon it. By this means he will be always prepared for it, and always longing and thirsting after it, and ready to catch at the next opportunity he can get of receiving it. And in the mean while he may make a shift to keep up his mind in a pretty good temper, through the grace and mercy of God ; who knowing that it is not his own fault that he doth not actually receive the holy sacrament, will be graciously pleased, as we have good ground to believe, to make up the want of it some other way.

But, blessed be God for it, this is not our case, who may receive the holy communion every Lord's-day in the year, and oftener too, if we have a mind to it. How happy would some good people think themselves, if they could find such opportunities as these are ? And how miserable shall we be, if we neglect and slight them ? For my part, I do not see how we shall be able to answer it either to God or to ourselves another day. Neither do I know what excuse or pretence any can have for it, besides those we have now refuted, except it be this one, which some have made to themselves, even, that they have been several times to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but have not found that benefit and comfort from it which they expected, and therefore think it to no purpose for them to receive it oftener than they are obliged to do it, in order to their continuing in the communion of the church.

This I know hath been a great stumbling-block to many well-meaning people, and therefore I shall endeavour to remove it out of the way as clearly as I can. For which purpose we may first observe,

that what God commands us to do, we are therefore to do it because he commands it, whether we can get any thing by it or no; otherwise we do it not for his sake, but our own; not in obedience to his command, but in hopes of profit and advantage to ourselves; whereby it ceaseth to be a good work, or any way acceptable to God, in that we do not respect him, but ourselves, and so prefer ourselves before him in it. As in our present case, we are commanded by God, our Saviour, to do this 'in remembrance of him.' Now if we do it only in expectation of gaining something to ourselves by it, we do not regard or obey him at all in it; in that we neither do it therefore because he commanded it, nor as he commanded it to be done. For he commanded it to be done in 'remembrance of him;' and so made that, not our profit, the chief end of his institution. And therefore although he hath commanded us nothing but what is really for our good, and that this is so in a high and special manner; yet we must not make that our end in doing it, but we must 'eat this bread,' and 'drink this cup, in remembrance of him,' whether we receive any benefit from it or no; yea, although we were sure to have none; and so do it in pure and sincere obedience to his commandment; which, whosoever doth, will be sure, one time or other, to find the benefit and comfort of it, though not, perhaps, at present.

For the blessed body and blood of Christ received, as it ought to be, with a quick and lively faith, will most certainly have its desired effect. But it operates for the most part upon our souls, as our ordinary food doth upon our bodies, insensibly, and by degrees. We eat and drink every

day, and by that means our bodies grow to their full stature, and are then kept up in life, health, and vigour, though we ourselves know not how this is done, nor, perhaps, take any notice of it. So it is with this spiritual meat and drink, which God hath prepared for our souls. By eating and drinking frequently of it, we grow by degrees in grace, and in the 'knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and still continue steadfast and active in the true faith and fear of God; though, after all, we may be no way sensible how this wonderful effect is wrought in us, but only as we find it to be so by our own experience. And if we do that, we have no cause to complain that we get nothing by it; for we get more than all the world is worth; being strengthened in the inward man, and so made more fit for the service of God, more constant in it, and more able to perform it; or at least are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations, which otherwise we might be exposed to. And this, surely, is enough to make any one, that really minds the good of his soul, to hunger and thirst after this bread and water of life, and to eat and drink it as often as he can, although he do not presently feel the happy effect of it, as some have done, and as he himself sometimes may, when God seeth it necessary or convenient for him. In the meanwhile, he may rest satisfied in his mind, that he is in the way that Christ hath made to heaven; and thank God for giving him so many opportunities of partaking of Christ's body and blood, and also grace to lay hold of them, to improve them to his own unspeakable comfort, such as usually attends the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper: whereby

we are not only put in mind of the great sacrifice which the Son of God offered for our sins, but likewise have it actually communicated unto us, for our pardon and reconciliation to the almighty Governor of the world, which is the greatest comfort we can have on this side heaven ; so great, that we shall never be able to express it unto others, how deeply soever we may be affected with it in ourselves. And though we be not always thus sensibly cheered and refreshed with it, as we could wish to be, howsoever we can never receive the blessed sacrament, but we have the pleasure and satisfaction of having done our duty to our Maker and Redeemer, which far exceeds all the comforts of this life, and therefore may well stay our stomachs till God sees good to give us more.

But let us now suppose, that a man hath been often at our Lord's table, and yet hath seldom or never received any real benefit or comfort from it, not so much as that which ariseth from our reflecting upon our having done what our Saviour commanded us. This, I confess, may be the case of some persons: but then such should consider where the fault lies. It cannot lie in the institution itself; that can never fail of producing the same effect, where it is duly observed at one time as well as at another. And therefore the fault must be in the persons themselves; they do not duly observe the institution, and then it is no wonder if they be never the better for it. Now there are two things required to the due observation of it: first, that men come rightly prepared to the holy sacrament; and then, that they receive it aright. They who fail either of these ways, must blame themselves if they miss of what they expected from it. What is necessary to

the preparing ourselves for it I have already spoken of, and have shown that it is no more than what may be easily done, if men will but set themselves in good earnest about it. But if men will not do that, but come to the Lord's table as they do to their own, without putting themselves, by God's assistance, into a right temper and disposition for it, they have no ground to expect any advantage by it. For they are not subjects capable of those spiritual profits and pleasures which are there exhibited. Their hearts are not set towards them, but rather bent quite another way; and therefore cannot possibly be touched or affected by them. What wonderful power hath the sun upon plants and seeds in the earth, to make them grow and bring forth fruit? And yet such plants or seeds which are rotten, corrupted, or not rightly set and disposed as they ought to be, are never the better for the influences of the sun, but remain just as they were, how long soever it shines upon them. So it is here: Christ, the sun of righteousness, shines most powerfully in his church, especially at the commemoration of the great eclipse which he once suffered, as they find by experience, who come duly prepared to it, being so quickened, enlivened, actuated, and strengthened by it, that they bring forth love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, and all the other fruits of God's Holy Spirit, as they are reckoned up by his apostle.¹ Whereas, they who are disordered and out of tune, and will not take pains to put themselves into a suitable temper and disposition for it, they are no way wrought upon or influenced by it, but still con-

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

tinue barren and unfruitful. And so all must needs do who come not rightly qualified to the holy sacrament; they cannot truly eat of the blessed body and blood of Christ; and if they did, they could not digest it into proper food and nourishment for their souls; and so can receive no real profit or advantage by it. Which, notwithstanding, should not discourage any from coming as oft as they can to the Lord's table, but should rather excite them to prepare themselves always as well as they can for it: for then they will never complain of unprofitableness any more: but let them come as often as they please, they will every time go home better than they came, if they do but come thus rightly disposed to receive the body and blood of Christ which is there communicated to them, and then likewise receive it also as they ought.

How they ought to receive it, is the next question to be considered. And it had need be considered very seriously by all that expect any benefit from the Lord's supper. For although they come with never so good a disposition to it, yet, unless they keep themselves in the same while they are at it, and actually partake of Christ's body and blood, according to his holy institution, their expectations will be all frustrated. For the great benefit which we receive from this holy sacrament, is the strengthening and refreshing our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. But as our bodies cannot be strengthened or refreshed by the bread and wine, unless we eat and drink it, so neither can our souls be so by the body and blood of Christ, unless we actually partake of it. But our souls cannot actually partake of the

body and blood of Christ any other way than by some act of their own ; even by acting their faith in what is there signified and represented to them. What we there see with our bodily eyes, although consecrated to a holy use, it is still in its own nature plain bread and wine, which may strengthen and refresh our bodies, but can have no such influence or effect upon our souls, as being of a quite different nature from them. But by faith, we look upon them as the signs and symptoms of Christ's body and blood, and receive them as such upon his word ; which, as I have shown, is a mighty strengthening and refreshing to our souls. But we can never thus receive Christ's body and blood, nor so much as discern it any other way, but by a quick and lively faith ; but that, as the apostle saith, ' is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.'¹ The body and blood of Christ is not seen in the holy sacrament ; but faith doth plainly evidence, yea, itself is the evidence of it to us. So that by faith I am as fully persuaded of it, as if I saw it. And, although we do not see it there, yet we hope for it, because of Christ's word ; and what we thus hope for, our faith is the substance of it to us, causing it to subsist and operate in us as effectually to all intents and purposes, as we can expect or desire, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls. Whereas, without such a faith as this, we can receive nothing but bread and wine, and by consequence no spiritual benefit or comfort at all from the holy sacrament. And that is the reason, why, according to the appointment of our church, at the distribution of the

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

sacramental bread, we say to every communicant, "Take, and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith:" whereby every one is put in mind in the very act of receiving, that he must there feed upon Christ by faith, as the only means whereby he can partake of his body and blood, so as to receive strength and nourishment to his soul from that holy feast.

For, indeed, the whole stress of this great work lies upon our faith. Unless that be duly exerted and acted, though men come to the Lord's table, and feed upon the outward elements which are there given them, this is not to eat the Lord's supper; for that is a spiritual banquet, which cannot be so much as tasted of, any otherwise than by faith. And therefore, they who do not receive it with faith, have no cause to complain that they are never the better for receiving the Lord's supper; for they do really receive it no more than as if they were not present where it is administered; and so can expect no more benefit from it, than from food or physic which they do not take. But this should not dishearten any from coming to the Lord's supper as often as they can, but should make them more careful to receive it always as they ought, with faith; and then they can never fail of their expectations from it; but will always receive as much, and often more than they could expect.

By this, we may see how we ought to receive the Lord's supper: if we desire to partake of the benefits of it, we must receive it with faith. And hence it is that our church hath, in her great wisdom, so contrived that incomparable office which she hath made for the administration of this holy sacrament, that from the beginning to the end

of it, there is matter and occasion given us all along, for the exercise of our faith in Christ, and the promises which God hath made us in him, that so we may be sure to partake of his most blessed body and blood, and of all the merits of his death, whensoever we meet together for the celebration of it. Which that I may the better demonstrate, and likewise show how we should act our faith all the while that we are at our Lord's table, so as to receive spiritual strength and comfort from it, it will not be amiss if we go through the whole office, especially so much of it as is or ought to be always used when there is a communion, and not at any other time.

All from the beginning of the service, to the end of the prayer for Christ's holy catholic church, is appointed to be read upon Sundays and holy days, although there be no communion; but if there be a communion in the church upon any other day as well as those, it ought to be read. And therefore, it will be expedient to premise something concerning that, at least so much, that we may understand the design of it, and how it makes way for our better performing of this great duty.

This service, therefore, being appointed for the communion of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as it is to be all, and always, read at his table by one of his ministers; so it begins with his prayer, the prayer which he himself composed, and left to his church as a standing general form, to be used by all persons, at all times, and upon all occasions; to which it is fitted in such a wonderful manner, as sufficiently shows both the author and intent of it. To this is subjoined, a short prayer for this particular occasion,

that God would be pleased to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name, in keeping his commandments; which immediately after, are so solemnly repeated in his name, by one of his ministers, standing at his table, that we may, and ought to hearken to them with the same attention, reverence, and godly fear, as if God himself pronounced them again to us, as he did to the Israelities, from Mount Sinai, with thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the angelic trumpets sounding in our ears.¹ While we are thus hearkening to these divine laws, distinctly published and proclaimed to every one of us in particular, we cannot but every one call to mind his own sins, whereby he hath offended against these laws, and how unable he hath been to keep any one of them as he ought, without the grace of God; and therefore, we have no sooner heard any of them repeated, but we immediately beg of God mercifully to pardon our former transgressions of it, and to give us grace to observe it for the future, saying after the repetition of each commandment, from the bottom of our hearts, as well as with our mouth, ‘Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.’ All which must needs be acknowledged to be of great use to our due commemoration of that death which the Son of God suffered for these our sins, and to our partaking of his body and blood for the pardon of them, and for grace to walk hereafter in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. For, though we did examine ourselves privately before, we do it again publicly,

¹ Exod. xx. 1—18.

in the special presence of God himself, openly declaring and making known his laws particularly unto us, whereby our sins and infirmities are brought afresh to our remembrance, and we come to the holy sacrament with an actual sense of them upon our minds, and so are better able to apply the great remedy which is there prepared for our ease and cure. Upon which account, I cannot but admire the prudence as well as piety of our church, in appointing the commandments to be publicly read upon this occasion.

The commandments of almighty God having been thus solemnly read to us, in obedience to them, we first pray, as we are bound to do in every distinct service, for his vicegerent upon earth, and then for ourselves and brethren in the collect for the day ; which, if it be an holy day, hath respect to the blessing we then commemorate, otherwise it is for some special grace or mercy that we have all need of.

After this follows the epistle, that is, some part of those epistles which St. Paul, or other apostles, wrote by the inspiration of God, wherein we are usually reminded of some of those duties which we heard before enjoined us in the commandments ; or upon particular occasions, some other portion of Scripture relating to that occasion. Then follows the gospel, or some of the divine sayings or acts of our blessed Saviour, as they are recorded by one of the four evangelists, which never alters. There is never any other portion of Scripture appointed for the gospel, as there is for the epistle : but that is always taken out of the very gospel itself. By which means, we always hear something which Christ himself spake with his divine mouth, for our

instruction, when he was upon earth : or else something which he did, by his divine power, for the confirmation of our faith, in him. Hence it is, that at the reading of the gospel, the people are all required to stand up, not only to show their readiness to stand by and defend it to the last, but likewise to express their respect and reverence to Christ himself, whose gospel it is, and whose words and works they hear rehearsed ; and therefore, must needs stand up to hearken diligently to them, as they would have certainly done, if they had been near him when he spake, or did them. And hence also it is, that in the first Common-prayer Book which was put out by king Edward VI. so soon as the minister had said, "The holy gospel is written in such a chapter," the people were ordered to say, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord ;" to testify their acknowledgment, that he whose gospel they were now to hear, is their Lord and Master, the great and almighty God ; that all glory and honour is due to him for revealing this gospel to them, and accordingly to adore and worship him for it. As all should do when they pronounce these words.

So soon as the gospel is read, the Nicene creed begins ; which itself also contains the sum and substance of the gospel ; and therefore is appointed to be said or sung by all the people, standing in the same posture as they did in hearing of the gospel. And that, I suppose, is the reason why, although after the reading of the epistle, the minister is to say, "Here endeth the epistle ;" yet after the reading of the gospel, he is not to say, "Here endeth the gospel," (as many, who do not consider the Rubric, are wont to do,) because the

gospel doth not properly end there, but continues to be declared and published in the following creed: in which are briefly comprehended all the great articles of that holy religion which Christ hath revealed to us in his gospel; and therefore it ought to be jointly repeated by all the people there present, that all may thereby publicly own and profess their belief of all and every one of those articles, and so of the whole gospel of Christ, in order to their being admitted to the holy communion: which otherwise they ought not to be.

After this creed there follows one of the homilies or sermons, set forth by authority, or else one composed by the minister himself, for the fuller explication of some part of the said creed, or else of the commandments before repeated; which therefore comes in very properly in this place, after the summary of that Christian doctrine, according to which all sermons ought to be framed. After sermon, the priest returns to the Lord's table, and then begins the offertory, reading some sentences of holy Scripture, chosen out on purpose to excite and stir up the people to give every one according to his ability, something to pious and charitable uses. And while these sentences are in reading, the deacons, churchwardens, or some fit persons appointed for that purpose, gather the alms and other devotions of the people, and bring them to the priest, who humbly presents and placeth them upon the Lord's table, as devoted to him, and then begins the prayer for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth.

Thus much of the communion-service, even from the beginning of it to the end of the aforesaid prayer for Christ's catholic church, is to be said

upon Sundays, or other holy days, although there be no communion for want of a sufficient number to communicate with the priest. In the first Common-prayer Book of king Edward VI. it was ordered, that the priest, although there were none to communicate with him, shall say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration of the Lord's supper, until after the offertory, upon Wednesdays and Fridays, without any mention of Sundays and holy days. From whence it appears, that they took it for granted, that there would always be a sufficient number of communicants upon every Sunday and holy day at the least; so that they could not so much as suppose there would be no communion upon any of those days: but it seems they feared, that upon other days there might be sometimes none to communicate with the priest, and so no communion; and therefore ordered, that if it should so happen for a whole week together, yet, nevertheless, upon the Wednesdays and Fridays in every week, so much shall be said of the communion-service as is before limited; but afterwards, as piety grew colder and colder, the sacrament began to be more and more neglected, and, by degrees, quite laid aside upon the week-days. And then the church did not think it convenient to order any of the service appointed for it to be read upon any other days, but only upon Sundays and holy days; but upon those days she still requires, that although there be no communion, yet all shall be said that is appointed at the communion, until the end of the general prayer, (for the good estate of the catholic church of Christ,) together with one or more of the collects at the end of the communion-service, concluding with the blessing.

And verily, there is great reason it should be so : not only because it is fitting that our devotion should be longer upon those, than they are upon other days ; but likewise there are several things particular in that part of the service which requires it.

Here are the commandments of Almighty God, the supreme lawgiver of the world, which it is requisite that people should hear, and be put in mind of, at least upon those days which are dedicated to his service. Here is the collect, epistle, and gospel, proper to many Sundays, and to all holy days in the year, without which they could not be distinguished from one another, nor from other days, nor by consequence celebrated, so as to answer the end of their institution, unless they were read upon their proper days. Here is the Nicene creed, wherein the divinity of our blessed Saviour is asserted and declared, and therefore very proper to be said, or sung upon those days which are kept in memory of him, and of his apostles, by whom that doctrine, together with our whole religion grounded upon it, was planted and propagated in the world. Here is the offertory, and choice sentences of Scripture, read to stir up people to offer unto God something of what he hath given them, as their acknowledgment that he gives them all they have, and that they hold it all of him ; which howsoever it be now generally neglected, except there be a communion, yet people ought certainly to be put in mind of it, upon all holy days, and especially upon the Lord's own day, according to his own order, written by his apostle St. Paul.¹ Here, among others, is the

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

prayer for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth ; and it is but reason that we, as fellow-members of the same body, should join together in it upon all the great festivals of the year, which are generally celebrated by the whole church we pray for, and by that means testify our communion with it. And besides, this, as well as the other part of the communion-service, is performed at the communion-table, the place where the primitive church used to perform its public devotions ; and ours, which in all things else is conformable to that, cannot but imitate it in this particular, at least so far as to have some part of its service performed at the same place upon Sundays and holy days, although there be no communion.

But the main reason why so much of the communion-service is ordered to be read upon Sundays and other holy days, notwithstanding that there is no communion, seems to be, that the church may show her readiness to administer it upon these days, and so that it is not hers, nor the minister's, but the people's fault, if there be no communion. For the minister, by her order, goes up to the Lord's table, and there begins the service appointed for the communion, and goes on as far as he can, till he comes to the actual celebration of it ; and if he stops there, it is only because there are none, or not a sufficient number of persons to communicate with him ; for if there were, he was bound, and is ready to consecrate and administer it to them. And therefore, if there be no communion upon any Sunday or holy day in the year, the people only are to be blamed, and must answer for it another day. The church hath done her part in ordering it, and the minister his in observing

that order; and if the people would do theirs too, the holy communion would be constantly celebrated in every parish-church in England, every Sunday and holy day throughout the year. Neither can they plead ignorance in the case, or say, they did not think it to be their duty to communicate so often; for every time they see the minister go up to the communion table, and there read part of the service appointed for the holy communion, they are put in mind of their duty, and upbraided with their neglect of it. From all which we may observe by the way, how much those ministers are to be blamed, who ever omit this part of the service, or do not perform it at the place appointed for it: how they can answer it to God, to the church, to their people, or to themselves, for my part, I know not.

Having thus briefly run over so much of the communion-service as is to be read when there is no communion, as well as when there is, we are now come to that part of it which never is nor can be used, but only when the holy communion is actually administered; and therefore is chiefly to be considered in our present design, of showing how we may, and ought to receive it, so as to find the benefit and comfort of it. For which purpose we may observe, that after the prayer for Christ's holy catholic church, before mentioned, the minister, who is always a priest, seeing a competent number of devout Christians ready and desirous to partake of the body and blood of our blessed Redeemer, first reads to them a grave, pious, and pathetic exhortation, to consider what they are about to do; of how great benefit it will be to them, if with a true penitent heart, and a lively

faith, they receive that holy sacrament ; how dangerous to receive the same unworthily ; how they should come to it ; what cause they have to give their most hearty thanks to the most holy Trinity, for the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, who ordained these holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for the continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. All which is so clear and affectionately expressed, that it contributes very much to the making up the defects of their preparation for it, and to raise their minds into such a holy and devout temper as to be capable both of performing this great duty aright, and of receiving the benefits and comforts of it.

The exhortation being ended, the minister (in the name of Christ and his church) inviteth all, who are thus godly disposed, to the Lord's supper, saying to them, "Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort." He invites them first to draw near, thereby putting them in mind, that they are now invited into Christ's more special presence, to sit down with him at his own table, that so they may be near him at his own table, that so we may be near him as they can be in this world ; and therefore, as an emblem thereof, should come from the more remote parts of the church, as near to the said table as they may. But then he adviseth them to draw near with faith, as without which, all their bodily approaches will avail them nothing, it being only by faith that they can really draw near to Christ, and take this holy sacrament to their comfort. And therefore they should take special notice of this expression, used on purpose in this place, to stir up their pure

minds, by way of remembrance, to keep their faith in continual exercise all the while that they are at our Lord's table, so as to look upon him as there present with them, observing all the motions both of their souls and bodies, and ready to communicate his own most blessed body and blood unto them, to preserve their souls and bodies to everlasting life. But seeing they cannot act their faith as they ought in Christ who died for their sins, until they have confessed and repented of them: therefore he calls upon them to make their humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon their knees.

And now all that are to communicate, being prostrate upon their knees, as so many guilty malefactors before the Judge of the world, do in a most humble and solemn manner, jointly acknowledge and bewail the manifold sins and wickedness, which they from time to time have committed, in thought, word, and deed, against his Divine Majesty: professing themselves most earnestly to repent of them; humbly beseeching him to pardon what is past, and to grant them grace, for the future, to serve and please him in newness of life, for Christ Jesus's sake, all which is done with such apposite and pathetic words, that I do not see how it is possible for us to express our hearty and sincere repentance better than we do at that time.

While people continue in this humble posture, begging for mercy and grace at the hands of God, his minister stands up, and in his name assures them that he, of his infinite mercy, hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; and therefore he applies the said promises to all and every

one there present, praying that Almighty God would accordingly have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins, confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and bring them to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And here it is that our faith must begin to work, as it is the substance of things hoped for, or a solid and substantial confidence that God will give us all the good things which he hath promised, and therefore hope for at his hands, so as firmly and steadfastly to believe, that upon our hearty and sincere repentance, we are now absolved from all our former sins; and that from this time forward, God will assist us with his grace to serve and please him, according to the prayers we have now put up to him, and the promises which he hath made to us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for all the benefit of absolution, as pronounced by the minister, depends wholly upon this, our believing in the promise and word of God, upon which it is grounded.

Which, therefore, that we may do, the minister presently reads some select sentences of the Holy Scriptures, wherein God hath promised or declared his willingness to pardon and absolve us from our sins in the blood of his Son, that so we may act our faith accordingly upon them; and therefore he calls upon the people to hear, and take special notice of them.

As first, those comfortable words which our Saviour saith to all that truly turn to him, 'Come unto me all that travail, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.'¹ Which words contain so firm

¹ Matth. xi. 28.

and solid a foundation, whereupon to build our most holy faith, that if we be but truly penitent, we cannot doubt of God's mercy to us. For here, his only Son, with his own divine mouth, invites all that are so to come to him, promising or engaging his word, that he will refresh them : he will give them peace in their minds, quiet in their consciences, rest to their souls. He will take care that they shall neither travail, nor be heavy laden any longer, with the burden of their sins ; for he will refresh them with the sense of God's mercy, in the pardon of all their faults, and, with the assistance of his grace, in the mortifying of all their lusts. ' Sin shall no longer have dominion over them, because they are not now under the law, but under his grace.'¹

Now, these being the words of Christ, of truth itself, we may, and ought to have, a sure trust and confidence in them, so as to be fully persuaded in our minds, that we being in the number of those whom he calls, and having obeyed his call in coming to him, he, according to his word, will ease us of our sins, and give us rest ; especially considering that he himself assures us also with his own mouth, that ' God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'² Which words containing the substance of the design of the whole gospel, pronounced by Christ himself, are therefore read in the next place, that we might have occasion to exercise our faith in all of it, and so have no place left for diffidence, or doubting. For seeing the great reason that moved

¹ Rom. vi. 14.

² John, iii. 16.

God to send his Son, was his infinite love to mankind; and the only end why he did it, was, 'that all who believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life:' what can we desire more, to excite and confirm our faith in him? For 'he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'¹

But lest the sense of our former sins should be apt to make us despond, or despair of mercy, that nothing may be wanting to complete and strengthen our faith at this time, there are two other divine sentences read; the one of St. Paul, saying, 'This is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'² And the other of St. John, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.'³ Whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ came into the world on purpose to save such sinners as we are; that he was made a propitiation for our sins, by undergoing all the punishments that were due unto us for them; and that he is now our advocate in heaven, always interceding for us, and ready to apply the merits of his death unto us. At the hearing of which, our faith hath so much ground and matter to work upon, that we may well say with St. Paul, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'⁴

¹ Rom. viii. 32.² 1 Tim. i. 15.³ 1 John, ii. 1.⁴ Rom. viii. 33, &c.

Having thus exercised our faith, and so got above this world, we are now ready to go into the other, and to join with the glorified saints and angels in praising and adoring that God, who hath done so great things for us ; which that we may the better do, the minister calls upon us to ‘ lift up our hearts,’ to lift them up as high as we can, by a quick and lively faith in the most high God, the supreme governor of the whole world. Which being now ready to do, we immediately answer, “ We lift them up unto the Lord.” And our hearts being now all lift up together, and so in right posture to celebrate the high praises of God, the minister invites all to join with him in doing it, so as at the same time to believe that he is our Lord, and our God, saying, “ Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.” Which the people having consented to and approved of, by saying, “ It is meet and right so to do ;” he turns himself to the Lord’s table, and acknowledgeth to his Divine Majesty there specially present, that “ it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks to him.” And then the minister looking upon himself, and the rest of the communicants, as members of the church triumphant, and all apprehending themselves, by faith, as in the midst of that blessed society, we join with them in singing forth the praises of the most high God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, saying, “ therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory ; glory be to thee, O Lord, most high.” And certainly, if ever our souls

be in heaven, while our bodies are upon earth, it must be in the singing of this heavenly anthem, when our spirits 'with those of just men made perfect,' yea with the whole company of heaven, in so solemn and seraphic a manner, adore and magnify the eternal God, our Maker and Redeemer. Especially when we celebrate the nativity, the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, his mission of the Holy Ghost, or the most glorious Trinity; for which there are proper prefaces appointed to raise up our hearts as high as possible, in praising God for such transcendent mysteries and mercies as those are.

Now, if ever, our minds must needs be duly prepared to receive the blessed body and blood of our dear Lord. And therefore the minister having first acknowledged our unworthiness of so great a mercy, and prayed to God to assist with his own grace to receive it worthily, he then saith the prayer of consecration.

And now there is nothing either seen, or said, or done, but what puts us in mind of something or other, whereupon to employ and exercise our faith in the highest manner that we can.

When we see the bread and wine set apart for consecration, it reminds us of God's eternal purpose and determinate counsel, to offer up his Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The minister's reading the prayer of consecration, and performing that whole work alone, none of the people speaking a word, or any way assisting him in it, may put us in mind how the whole work of our salvation was accomplished by Christ alone, no mere creature contributing any thing at all to-

wards it; and therefore we should believe in him as our only mediator and advocate.

When we hear those words, 'Who in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread;' we are then by faith to behold our Lord at his last supper, there instituting this sacrament which we are now to receive, and distributing it to his apostles with his own most blessed hands.

When we see the bread broken, we should then call to mind that grief and pain, those bitter agonies and passions which the eternal Son of God suffered for our sins, and in our stead: how 'he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;' how his blessed body was broken, his hands and feet fastened to the cross, with nails drove through them; and all for our sins, even for ours.

And so when the minister takes the cup into his hands, or pours out the wine, we are then by faith to behold how fast the blood trickled down from our dear Lord and Saviour's head, when crowned with thorns; from his hands and feet, when nailed to the cross; from his side, when pierced with the spear; and from his whole body, when he was in his agony; and all to wash away our sins; still believing that it was for our sins that all this precious blood was shed; for such and such sins which we know every one ourselves to have been guilty of.

When we hear the words of consecration repeated, as they came from our Lord's own mouth, 'This is my body which is given for you, and this is my blood which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins;' we are then steadfastly

to believe, that although the substance of the bread and wine still remain, yet now it is not common bread and wine as to its use, but the body and blood of Christ in that sacramental sense, wherein he spake the words; insomuch that whosoever duly receives "these his creatures of bread and wine, according to Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, are partakers of his most precious body and blood," as it is expressed in the prayer of consecration.

When we see the minister distributing the sacramental bread and wine to the several communicants, we are then by faith to look upon our Lord as offering his blessed body and blood, and all the benefits of his death, to all that will receive them at his hands; entertaining ourselves, all the while others are receiving, with these or such like meditations:

MEDITATIONS BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world! Behold the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, who loved us, and gave himself for us; who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and washed us from them in his own blood! See how willing and ready he is to communicate the blessings he hath thereby purchased! how desirous that all would partake of them! Methinks I hear him crying out, 'Come unto me all ye that travail, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you!' Methinks I see him yonder, going about by his minister from one to another, and offering his most blessed body and blood, with all the merits of his most precious death, to all that will receive them faithfully.

Happy, thrice happy, are they who do so! They are absolved from all their sins and accounted righteous before God. They are delivered from the wrath to come by the blood of the Lamb, as the Israelites were by that which was typically sprinkled upon their door-posts. They are reconciled to the great Creator and Governor of all things, and made his children by adoption and grace. They are always safe and secure under his care and protection, and never want any thing that is really good for them. They have his Son always interceding for them, and his Spirit always abiding with them, to direct and assist them in what they do. 'They are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,'¹ and therefore they will be glorified with him for ever. O that I might be in the number of those blessed souls! When will it once be? When will my Lord and Saviour come to me, that I also may partake of his most blessed body and blood? My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready to receive it. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Thus we may employ our thoughts while others are receiving; but when it comes to our turns to receive it, then we are to lay aside all thoughts of bread, and wine, and minister, and every thing else that is or can be seen, and fix our faith, as it is 'the evidence of things not seen,' wholly and solely upon our blessed Saviour, as offering us his own body and blood to preserve our bodies and souls to

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

everlasting life, which we are therefore to receive by faith, as it is 'the substance of things hoped for,' steadfastly believing it to be, as our Saviour said, 'his body and blood;' which, as our church teacheth us, 'are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper. By which means, whatsoever it is to others, it will be to us, who receive it with such a faith, the body and blood of Christ our Saviour, the very 'substance of things hoped for,' upon the account of his body that was broken, and his blood that was shed for us.

And the better to excite and assist us in the exercise of our faith after this manner, at our receiving the holy sacrament, the minister, at the distribution of it, first applies the merits of Christ's death to each particular person that receives it, saying to every one singly, and by himself, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, and the blood which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life," that so I may apply and appropriate it to myself as the body and blood of him that loved me, and gave himself for me, to preserve my body and my soul unto everlasting life. And then he adds, at the distribution of the bread, "Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving." Whereby I am put in mind again to eat it, in remembrance that Christ died for me in particular; and then am taught how to feed upon him, even in my heart by faith, with thanksgiving. In my heart, because it is not bodily but spiritual food: by faith, as the only means whereby the heart or soul can take in its proper nourishment, and re-

ceive 'the substance of things hoped for,' even the body and blood of Christ; and then it must be with thanksgiving too, as the necessary consequent of faith. For as no man can be truly thankful to Christ, unless he actually believe in him; so no man can actually believe in him, but he must needs be truly thankful both to and for him. And therefore at the distribution of the cup, after the words, "Drink this, in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee," it is only added, "and be thankful." Because this necessarily supposeth and implieth our feeding upon him in our hearts by faith, as without which it is impossible for us to be truly thankful.

Hence also it is, that our church requires us to receive the holy sacrament kneeling, not out of any respect to the creatures of bread and wine, but to put us in mind that Almighty God, our Creator and Redeemer, the only object of all religious worship, is there specially present, offering his own body and blood to us, that so we may act our faith in him, and express our sense of his goodness to us, and our unworthiness of it, in the most humble posture that we can. And indeed, could the church be sure that all her members would receive as they ought, with faith, she need not to command them to receive it kneeling; for they could not do it any other way: for how can I pray in faith to Almighty God, to preserve both my body and soul to everlasting life, and not make my body, as well as soul, bow down before him? How can I by faith behold my Saviour coming to me, and offering me his own body and blood, and not fall down and worship him! How can I by faith lay hold upon the pardon of my sins, as there sealed and delivered

to me; and receive it any otherwise than upon my knees? I dare not, I cannot do it. And they who can, have too much cause to suspect, that they do not discern the Lord's body, and therefore cannot receive it worthily. Be sure, our receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ, as the catholic church always did, in an humble and adoring posture, is both an argument and excitement of our faith in him. By it we demonstrate, that we discern the Lord's body, and believe him to be present with us in a particular sacramental sense, and by it we excite and stir up both ourselves and others to act our faith more steadfastly upon him, in that by our adoring him, we actually acknowledge him to be God, as well as man; and therefore him on whom we have all the reason in the world to believe and trust for our salvation.

When we have thus spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, and drank his blood, then we are firmly to believe, and rest fully satisfied in our minds, that according to his own word, 'Christ now dwelleth in us, and we in him,' that 'Christ is one with us, and we with him.' And therefore, that God hath now sealed to us the pardon of our sins in his blood, and will enable us for the future to 'walk in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.' Which faith, together with our thankfulness for so great a mercy, we ought to exercise all the while that the rest of the communicants are receiving; not suffering our thoughts to wander up and down, but keeping them as close up as we can to the work, still ruminating upon that spiritual food which we have eaten, after this, or the like manner:—

EJACULATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS AFTER THE
HOLY COMMUNION.

‘Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.’¹
‘Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: he also is become my salvation.’²
He himself, by the one oblation of himself once offered, hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world: and he hath now given me a share in it. For he hath communicated unto me that body and blood wherewith he did it, and hath assured me thereby of his favour and goodness towards me, in the pardon of all my sins, and that I am a member incorporate in his mystical body, and an heir through hope of that everlasting kingdom, which he hath purchased with his own blood. What shall I render unto the Lord for these his most inestimable benefits? I will offer and present myself, my soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto him. I will believe in him, I will trust in him, I will love and honour him with all my heart and soul. I will spend the rest of my days wholly in his service, and to his glory; I will order all my conversation as becometh his gospel; I will crucify the flesh; I will resist the devil; I will keep myself unspotted from the world; I will abstain from all appearance of evil, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for me to walk in. For his grace shall be sufficient

¹ Psalm ciii. 1, 2.² Isaiah, xii. 2.

for me, his strength shall be made perfect in my weakness, his power shall rest upon me, his Holy Spirit shall abide continually with me, and in me, to direct, sanctify, and govern both my heart and body in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments; so that now, through his most mighty protection, I shall be preserved both in soul and body to everlasting life. Amen. Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power be unto the Lord our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Now when all have communicated with the same humble confidence, we jointly address ourselves to Almighty God, as our heavenly Father, in that divine form of prayer which he, whose body and blood we have now received, was pleased to compose, and require us to use upon all occasions. After which, having added another prayer proper for this great and solemn occasion, we join together in singing, or saying, that incomparable hymn:

“Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good-will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee, for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

“O Lord, the only begotten Son Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

“For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord,

thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen."

The first part whereof was sung by the choir of heaven at our Lord's nativity, and the rest added by the primitive, if not by the apostolic church, it being the most ancient hymn that we know of, and that which hath been generally used, both by Greek and Latin churches, all along from the beginning of Christianity. And this is the most proper place for it: now that our hearts are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, and so ready to sing and give praise in the best manner that we can ever do it upon earth. But for that purpose, it will be necessary to keep our minds all the while intent, and our faith still fixed upon God the Father almighty, and upon his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, to whom we here speak in a particular manner, and therefore should look upon him as specially present with us, hearing what we say to him, and observing how earnestly we beseech him, the "Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, who taketh away the sins of the world," to have mercy upon us, and how heartily we adore and magnify his divine holiness, his absolute dominion over the whole world; and his, together with the Holy Spirit's, infinite height in the glory of the Father.

After all which duly performed, having prayed for God's acceptance of what we have done, and for his blessing upon us, we are accordingly dismissed, as well as we may, with 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and with the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' which must be and remain with those who thus receive the holy communion always.

I have now gone over the whole communion-service, taking notice by the way of such things only, as are plain and obvious in the several parts of it. From whence it is easy to observe, that it is all contrived so, as to set before us continual matter for our faith to work upon, before, as well as at, the receiving the holy sacrament; that our faith having been kept so long in exercise upon our blessed Saviour beforehand, it may be more ready to be fixed upon him in the actual receiving the holy communion, so as that we may partake of his most blessed body and blood; which otherwise we could not: for without our faith, as it is impossible to please God, so it is impossible to partake of Christ. And therefore, not only infidels who have no faith at all, but they also who have faith, unless they use it at the holy sacrament, they can only receive the outward part, or sign of the Lord's supper; they cannot possibly partake of his body and blood signified by it: for that cannot so much as be discerned, much less received any other way than by faith. And that is the reason why so many go from the holy sacrament no better than they came to it; because while they are there, they either stare about them, or think of other things, at least, they do not keep their minds and faith intent upon the work they are about. They feed only upon the bread and wine with their mouths, they do not feed upon Christ in their hearts by faith; and therefore cannot possibly receive any spiritual strength or refreshment from him. Whereas, if whilst they are eating and drinking the outward elements, they would at the same time lift up their hearts, and fix their faith upon that which is signified and represented by them, their souls would be

much more strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, than their bodies are by the bread and wine.

From hence it appears, both how little reason any can have to plead their unprofitableness under it, as an argument for their not frequenting the holy sacrament, and likewise how we may receive it, so as to be always the better for it. But for that purpose it is requisite that we do it often; for the oftener we do it, the more expert we shall be at it, and the more benefit and comfort we shall receive from it. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for those who do it only now and then, (as once or twice a year,) ever to do it as they ought: for every time they come to it, they must begin, as it were, again, all the impressions which were made upon their minds at the last sacrament being worn out before the next; and it being a thing they are not accustomed to, they are as much to seek how to do it now, as if they had never done it before. It is by frequent acts that habits are produced. It is by often eating and drinking this spiritual food, that we may learn how to do it, so as to digest and convert it into proper nourishment for our souls. And therefore I do not wonder that they who do it seldom, never do it as they ought, nor by consequence get any good by it: I should rather wonder if they did. But let any man do it often, and always according to the directions before laid down, and my life for his, he shall never lose his labour; but whether he perceives it or not, he will grow in grace, and gather spiritual strength every time, more and more.

If such considerations as these will not prevail upon men to lay aside their little excuses for the

neglect of so great a duty, and to resolve for the future upon the more constant performance of it, for my part, I know not what will ; and therefore shall say no more, but that I never expect to see our church settled, primitive Christianity revived, and true piety and virtue flourish again among us, till the holy communion be oftener celebrated, than it hath been of late, in all places of the kingdom ; and am sure, that if people were but sensible of the great advantage it would be to them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to frequent it as often as they can. For we should soon find, as many have done already, by experience, that this is the great means appointed by our ever-blessed Redeemer, whereby to communicate himself, and all the merits of his most precious death and passion to us, for the pardon of all our sins, and for the ‘ purging our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.’ So that by applying ourselves thus constantly unto him, we may receive constant supplies of grace, and power from him to live in his true faith and fear all our days ; and by conversing so frequently with him at his holy table upon earth, we shall be always fit and ready to go to him, and to converse perpetually with him in his kingdom above, where we shall have no need of sacraments, but shall see him ‘ face to face,’ and adore and praise him for ever ; as for all his other blessings, so particularly for the many opportunities he hath given us, of partaking of his most blessed body and blood.

THE END.

J. Rickerby, Printer, Sherbourn Lane.

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